



# THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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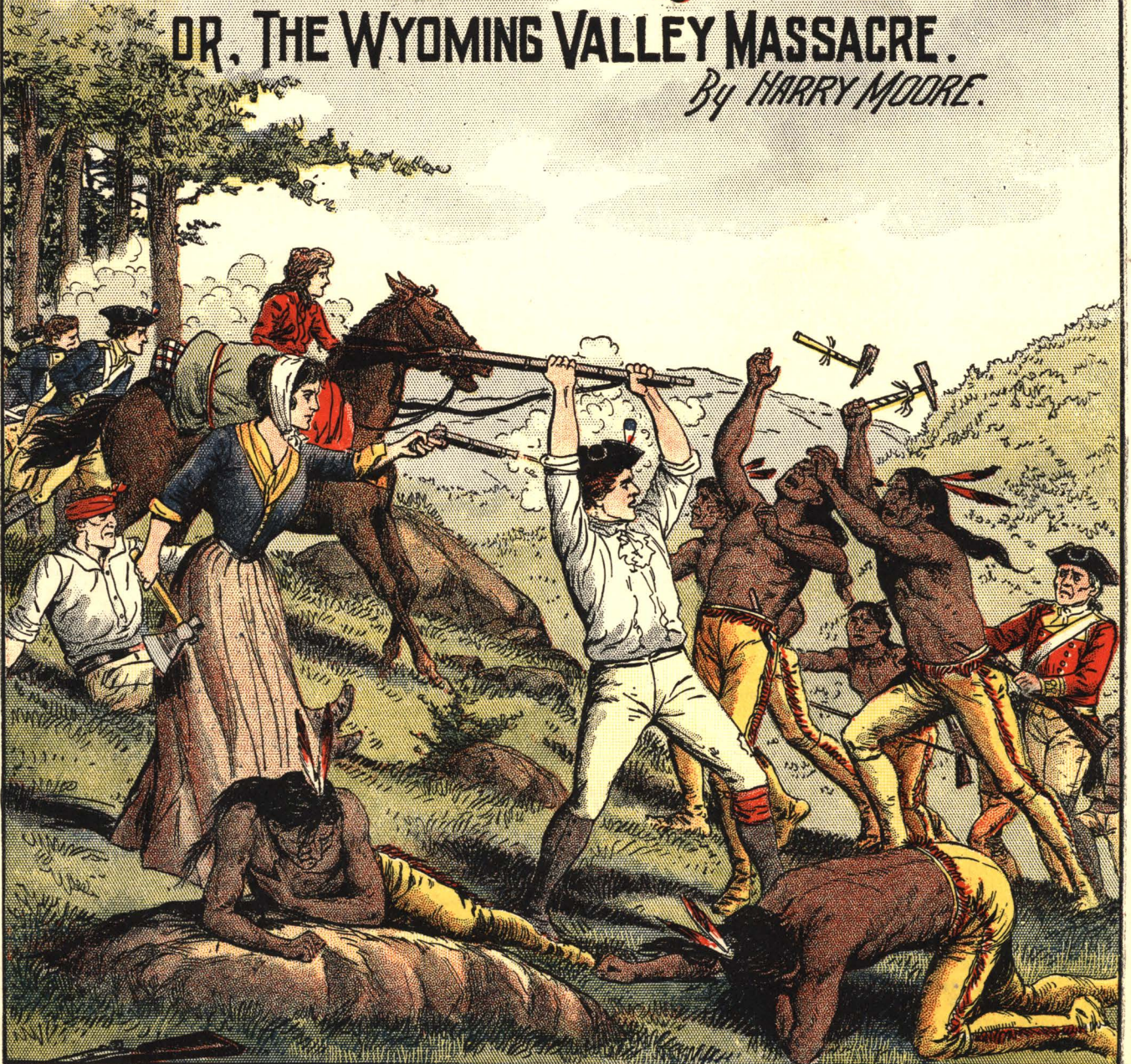
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## THE LIBERTY BOYS AND "QUEEN ESTHER"

OR, THE WYOMING VALLEY MASSACRE.

*By HARRY MOORE.*



The brave young woman shot one Indian dead. The red demons rushed forward and would have tomahawked her but for Dick Slater, who leaped off his horse and knocked them right and left with the butt of his musket.



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NEW YORK, JUNE 5, 1903.

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## The Liberty Boys and "Queen Esther"

OR,

### The Wyoming Valley Massacre.

By **HARRY MOORE.**

#### CHAPTER I.

##### EN ROUTE TO WYOMING VALLEY.

"How much farther is it to Wyoming Valley, Dick?"

"I don't know, Bob."

"I should think it would be possible for us to reach there this evening. What do you think?"

"I think that we will probably reach there this evening."

"And do you really think there is danger that the Tories and Indians of New York intend falling upon the unprotected families in Wyoming Valley, and massacring them?"

"Well, such was the rumor that reached the commander-in-chief, and he has sent us out here to do what we can to warn the people and protect them."

"We can warn them if we get there in time."

"Yes, that's the trouble; we don't know whether we will get there in time; it was the fear that we would be too late that caused you and I to push on ahead of the rest of the 'Liberty Boys,' at the top speed of our horses, so as to get there ahead of the Tories and Indians, if possible."

"Well, we have done our best; our horses have been pushed till they are almost exhausted."

"That's so. Well, if we are successful in warning the people and being the means of getting them to go to a secure point before the enemy gets there, we shall be well paid for the exertions we have put forth."

"Yes, it is terrible to think, Dick, of a whole settlement of families, consisting of women and children, and just a few old men, being exposed to such danger."

"So it is; it would be terrible indeed, if, while the men were away, fighting for the freedom of themselves and their

families, the Tories and Indians should come and kill the women and children and burn the homes."

"Yes, indeed. Well, we will save the families of the patriot soldiers, or do our best to do so, at any rate."

"You are right, Bob."

It was the afternoon of the 1st day of July, of the year 1778.

Two youths were riding along a winding road which led through the timber, in eastern central Pennsylvania.

They were riding toward the northwest, and were bound for the Wyoming Valley, to warn the settlers there that a force of Tories and Indians was thought to be on its way to destroy them.

The youths in question were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, and they were members of a military company called "The Liberty Boys of '76." Indeed, Dick Slater was the captain of the company.

The "Liberty Boys" had been in the patriot army two years, and had done good work. They had been in the majority of the battles that had taken place in the past two years, and had earned an enviable reputation for daring and desperate fighting on the field of battle. More than once the "Liberty Boys," by their desperate and determined fighting, had turned the tide of battle when it seemed to be going against the patriots, with the result that it had ended, instead, in a victory for the patriots.

In addition to this, Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook had earned great reputations as scouts, spies, and messengers. Of the two Dick was the more famous, he having been chosen for this dangerous and difficult work much more often than Bob, and so well had he always succeeded, that



he had become known as "The Champion Spy of the Revolution."

And now Dick and Bob were on their way to the Wyoming Valley, as has been said, they having been sent by the commander-in-chief, rumors having reached him that grave danger threatened the patriot families of the valley.

The two youths were accompanied on the trip by the entire company of "Liberty Boys," but in their haste to reach the valley and warn the settlers, Dick and Bob had pushed on at a rapid pace, and having better horses than the rest of the members of the company, had left them behind.

The youths had never been this far west before, and were not familiar with the country, but at the home of a settler several miles back they had stopped and made inquiries regarding the way to go, and had been told the distance to the valley, and had been told, also, that all they had to do was to keep following the road, or, more properly speaking, path through the timber.

"This road you are on is called 'The Connecticut Path,'" the settler said. "It was the trail passed over by the pioneers who came into this region from Connecticut; and, as you may know, the settlers of Wyoming Valley are mainly from that State."

The youths had ridden onward at a good pace, and now they were beginning to think it about time they were reaching the outer edge of the valley.

They were discussing the matter, talking earnestly, when of a sudden, as they rode around a bend in the road, they found themselves surrounded by a score of men, each and every one of whom held a leveled rifle.

The strangers were rough-looking, bearded fellows, dressed in the blue homespun of the mountain region, and it was evident that they were men who would shoot at the least provocation.

"Hello," exclaimed Dick, "what does this mean?"

"Et means thet ye fellers'll hev ter stop er little while," replied one man, who seemed to be the leader.

"Well, we have stopped. Now, what do you want?"

"We want'er hev'er leetle talk with ye."

"Go ahead."

The youths were willing to talk a bit, if by so doing they could get rid of these men and go on their way.

"Who are ye two fellers?"

"Travelers."

"Whar ye travelin' ter?"

"We are going out into the western part of the State."

"Humph! Yer boun' fur ther Wyomin' Valley, hain't ye?"

"Yes, just now."

"Whut ye goin' thar fur?"

"Oh, we just expected to stop there overnight."

"An' then go on in ther mornin'?"

"Yes."

The man shook his head slowly, as did the majority of the others.

"I don' berleeve ye," he said.

"Why don't you believe me? What object could I have in speaking falsely?"

"Waal, thet's fur ye ter know. I'll say thet I don' berleeve ye. I think thet ye air goin' ter Wyoming Valley an' no furdur."

"Well, even if that were true, what would be the harm? Have we not a right to go there, if we want to do so?"

"Oh, yas, I s'pose ye hev—under ord'nary sarkumstances."

"Well, are not these ordinary circumstances?"

Again the man shook his head.

"I don't think so," he said.

"Why don't you think so? What is goin' on in Wyoming Valley that travelers should not be permitted to go there, if it pleases them to do so?"

"Waal, thet's not fur me ter say. All I kin tell ye is thet jes' at present we'd ruther ye wouldn' go thar."

The man leered.

"Oh, ye mus' go, hey?" he said.

"Yes."

"W'y so?"

"Because, we are to reach a certain place in the western part of the State at such a time, and if we are delayed we will be too late, so kindly step aside and let us go on our way."

The fellow shook his head.

"I kain't think uv doin' thet," he said. "Ye'll hev ter stop erwhile, whether ye want'er er not."

"But that is an outrage," said Dick. "You have no right to detain us."

"Waal, we hev ther might, an' thet's jes' ez good."

The youths glanced around the ring, at the row of men with leveled rifles in their hands, and were compelled to acknowledge that it did look as though the man was right—that they had the might, if not the right.

"What do you want with us?" Dick asked.

"We want thet ye shall visit us erwhile," was the reply. "We air hospertable peeple, an' we want thet ye shall stop with us an' spend er few days restin' up and enjoyin' yer-selves."

"We cannot do that; we must go on, and at once, so stand aside."

Bob Estabrook was watching Dick closely; he was an eager, impulsive youth, and was ready to make a break for liberty if his comrade gave the sign for them to do so.

But Dick did not give the sign. He had looked keenly and searchingly at the men, and he decided that it would be suicidal to try to break through their ranks and escape. They were cool, hardy, and steady-nerved mountaineers, and they would be sure to bring one or both of the youths down with bullets from the leveled rifles if the two tried to escape, so Dick decided that it would be wiser and better to wait for a more favorable opportunity before trying to escape.

He did not expect that the men would pay any attention to his request that they stand aside; nor did they. The leader simply leered, and said:



"I've alreddy told ye thet ye kain't go on, at present; so git down offen yer hosses."

Bob's face grew red. His eyes flashed as he glanced inquiringly at his comrade.

"Are you going to submit, Dick?" he asked.

"I guess we will have to do so, Bob."

"No, we don't have to do anything of the kind. Let's go for the scoundrels."

"Ye hed better be keerful how ye tork," growled the leader of the band. "An' ez fur tryin' ter git erway—et'll be shore death ter ye ef ye do try et. We air dead shots, an' we'll put more'n er dozen bullets inter ye ef ye try enny tricks."

"We're dead shots, too," said Bob, "and we——"

"Had better do as the gentleman says, I think, Bob," broke in Dick. "It would be sure death, as he says, if we tried to escape."

"All right; you are the one to say," said Bob, with a sigh; but it was evident that he was not satisfied. He would have made the attempt, and taken the chances.

But Dick knew that it would not be safe to do so. With some men it would have worked, but with these iron-nerved mountaineers it would not have worked; they would have brought the youths down with bullets, without doubt, and Dick was not yet ready to die.

He leaped to the ground, Bob getting down also, but more slowly, and with evident reluctance.

"Well, we are off our horses, now what are you going to do?" asked Dick.

"We're goin' ter make pris'ners uv ye!" was the prompt reply.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE HANDS OF THE TORIES.

"You see, Dick?" murmured Bob. "We should have made a dash for it when we were on horseback."

"Why do you wish to make prisoners of us?" Dick asked. "What is your purpose in detaining us?"

"Thet's our bizness." Then the leader addressed a couple of the men by name, and told them to disarm the youths and fasten their arms with their belts.

This was done, the two not making any resistance, for Dick knew it was worse than useless. It was hard work for Bob to submit, however, and he grew red in the face because of the strain imposed upon him in holding himself in check.

"Now, bring 'em erlong," said the leader. "We'll go straight ter ther cabin."

He struck out through the timber, and his men followed, with the youths in their midst, two of the men bringing up the rear, leading the horses.

The men did not talk while walking along, nor did Dick and Bob. The youths were busy thinking, however.

They were saying to themselves that the delay, if extended, might be a costly one for the settlers of the Wyoming Valley.

They made up their minds, however, that they would not remain prisoners long, if there was any possibility of making their escape.

It was Dick's belief that they would be able to escape some time during the night.

Presently they came to a log house in the midst of the forest.

The youths judged they had come about a mile from the road.

They were careful to bear the general direction in mind, also, so that they would be enabled to find their way back to the road after making their escape, if they were so fortunate as to do so.

"Waal, heer we air," said the leader, with a grin. "I hope ye two young fellers'll be comfort'ble."

"Oh, I guess we shall be comfortable enough, so far as our bodies are concerned," said Dick. "But our peace of mind has been somewhat disturbed by this affair. We can see no reason why we should be made prisoners."

"No, I s'pose not," was the reply. "But we hev reezons, an' they air whut we think air good wuns, so thet is all thet is necessary."

Then he pointed to a bench outside the cabin, and told the youths to sit down.

They obeyed, and then the two who had charge of the horses unbridled and unsaddled the animals, and tied them to trees not far away.

Some of the men went inside the cabin, and began building a fire, evidently with the intention of cooking supper, it being now pretty well along toward evening.

There were a sufficient number of the men outside to make it a foolish and dangerous thing for the prisoners to attempt to escape, however, and the fellows kept their rifles close at hand, where they could be instantly seized.

"Now, s'posin' ye fellers answur er few questions," said the leader.

He was seated on a stump near the door.

"What are the questions?" asked Dick.

"Waal, in ther furst place, ye fellers air rebels, hain't ye?"

The youths knew, the instant the fellow said "rebels," instead of "patriots," that he was a Tory, and Dick was determined not to help them by acknowledging anything. It was war times, and all is fair in war, so he shook his head, and answered promptly and without hesitation:

"Oh, no; we are not rebels." Indeed, Dick did not consider that they were "rebels." They were patriots, and nothing else.

The man eyed them searchingly, as if trying to discover the truth in this manner. The youths looked so frank and innocent that he was puzzled; and Dick had answered so promptly and decidedly that this nonplussed him.

"Ye say ye hain't rebels?" he remarked, slowly and dubiously.



"Of course I say so, because it is so. Why, did you really think us rebels?"

"I'm shore ye air."

Dick shook his head, and Bob did the same.

"You are mistaken," said Dick. "We are not rebels, and if that is the reason you have made prisoners of us, you will release us at once, for you have made a great mistake."

But the Tory—for such the youths now knew the men to be—shook his head.

"I hev on'y yer word fur thet," he said, "an' I kain't think uv lettin' ye go."

"Who and what do you think we are?" asked Dick.

"Waal, we wuz told thet—I meen thet we thort ye wuz rebels an' spies, whut wuz comin' inter these parts ter hunt down ther loyal people."

"Who told you this?"

"Nobuddy," sullenly; "we jes' suspected et."

"You started to say that somebody told you so and so," said Dick.

"Thet wuz er slip, thet's all. I didn' mean nothin' by et."

But neither Dick nor Bob believed him. They were sure that someone had learned of their coming into the region, and had carried the news to these Tories.

They did not voice their thoughts, however, and presently Dick asked:

"How far is it from here to the Wyoming Valley?"

"Erbout three mile ter ther valley."

"And how far to Forty Fort—I believe that is what it is called?"

"Et's erbout eight mile frum here."

"Are there any rebel soldiers in the valley?"

"Yas—some."

"About how many—do you know?"

"Not exzackly; but I think theer air erbout three hundred."

The youth asked another question that was calculated to evoke some information, but the Tory refused to answer.

"Yer axin' too menny questions," he said, sullenly. "Keep still, an' don' tork so much."

"It won't do you any hurt to give us some information," said Dick.

"Wall, et won' do us enny good, eether; an' so ye mought ez well ax no more questions, fur I won't answur 'em."

"You will at least tell us how long you intend holding us prisoners here, won't you?"

"No, I won't tell ye thet, eether."

"Why not?"

"Becos I don' know, myse'f."

"Why don't you?"

"Thet'll do," surlily. "Don' ax me enny more."

And the Tory refused to answer any more questions, though Dick and Bob both asked a number, Bob doing it just to worry the fellow.

There had been a witness to the capture of the two "Liberty Boys" by the band of Tories.

Concealed behind a tree, on the opposite side of the road from that from which the Tories had come on surrounding the two youths, was a beautiful girl of perhaps seventeen or eighteen years.

She heard all that was said, and saw all that was done, and when the Tories marched away, with the two prisoners in their midst, she followed.

She was the daughter of a pioneer, and knew how to steal along silently and stealthily, after the fashion of the red Indian of the forest, and she had no difficulty in keeping in sight of the party, and yet keep herself from being seen.

She paused at a safe distance, when the party came to a stop at the log cabin, and, hidden behind a tree, watched the scene with eager eyes.

"That is Ben Rock and his band of Tories," the girl said to herself, "and I am sure that those two handsome young men are patriots. Now, I wonder if it will be possible for me to rescue them? I wish that I might be able to do so!"

The name of the girl was Laura Deane, and she was the daughter of a patriot who had gone to war, and was now with the patriot army. Laura and her mother and a brother of ten years, and another sister, aged eight, was the family, and they lived in a house located in a little clearing three-quarters of a mile from where the "Liberty Boys" had been stopped and captured.

Laura remained where she was for half an hour, at least, and then she stole away, going back in the direction from which she had come.

She walked slowly and wore a preoccupied air. She was doing a lot of thinking, was trying to figure out some way of setting the two handsome young men free.

She wished to do this on general principles, even had she not been sure they were patriots; for she knew Ben Rock well, and hated as well as feared him, and would be only too glad to spoil his plans, whatever they might be.

Ben Rock had tried to pay attention to Laura, and had been sent about his business very quickly. The brave girl had told him that she did not like him, and did not want that he should come near her. He had not been around the girl's home lately, but he had threatened that he would have her for his wife, whether she were willing or not, and the girl felt that sooner or later he would make trouble for her.

So, as has been said, she was quite ready to spoil his plans if she possibly could do so.

But how was she to do it? That was the question, and it was a hard one, and the girl wrestled with it as she walked slowly along.

At last she reached the road, and involuntarily paused, and looking down at the ground, pondered deeply.

How was she to effect the rescue of the two handsome young men who were prisoners in the hands of Ben Rock and his band of Tories?



"I don't see how I am to do it," she murmured, knitting her brows; "but I must do it! I must accomplish it somehow!"

Again she became plunged in thought; and several minutes passed.

Suddenly she thought she heard the sound of hoofbeats of horses, and she looked up.

Toward the south there was a bend in the road, and the trees shut out the view in this direction; it was from beyond the bend that the sound came, and she listened a few moments, and then stepped quickly back and took up her position behind a tree.

Scarcely had she done so when a party of horsemen to the number of nearly one hundred, the girl guessed, came in view around the bend.

"They are dressed almost exactly like the two young men in the hands of Ben Rock and his band!" the girl exclaimed to herself. "I wonder if they are comrades of the two? Oh, I hope so, for then they will go and rescue the young men and give Ben Rock and his men a good thrashing besides!"

The next moment the girl stepped out in the road and confronted the party of horsemen.

They reined up their horses in surprise, and the leader lifted his hat and bowed, and said:

"I beg your pardon, miss, but who are you?"

### CHAPTER III.

#### LAURA DEANE AND THE "LIBERTY BOYS."

"My name is Laura Deane, sir," was the reply, "and I live not far from here."

"Ah, well, I would like to ask, miss, if you have seen two young men pass along this road any time this afternoon?"

The girl started, and exclaimed:

"Oh, sir, are you young gentlemen friends of those two?"

"You saw them, then?" exclaimed the leader of the party, who was Mark Morrison—these being the "Liberty Boys."

"Yes, indeed! I saw them, sir."

"Ah, how long ago, miss?"

"Less than an hour, sir."

"Indeed? Then we have kept closer behind them than I thought was the case. Were they going in the same direction we have been going?"

"They were going that way, sir, until stopped."

"Until stopped!"

"Yes, sir."

"What's that you say, miss? A band of Tories stopped the two young men?"

"Yes, sir; stopped and made prisoners of them!"

"Did you see this done?"

"Yes, sir."

"And do you know which way the Tories went with their prisoners?"

"I do, sir; more, I know where they went."

"You do?"

"Yes, sir. You see, I followed them, and saw where they went."

"And will you show us where they are?" eagerly.

"Yes, sir, gladly."

"Good! We shall be much obliged, miss. And now, had we better leave our horses here, or can we go there on horseback?"

"You had better leave your horses; it is through timber all the way."

"Very well; we will leave our horses here under a guard. And now, how many of those Tories are there?"

"There are about twenty, sir."

"Good! We will make short work of the scoundrels."

"I hope so."

"You are a patriot, then, Miss Deane?"

"Yes, indeed. My father is in the patriot army."

"Good! Dismount, boys."

The "Liberty Boys" leaped to the ground.

Then Mark left six of the youths to stand guard over the horses, and with the rest followed Laura Deane, who had at once started in the direction of the Tories' camp.

Mark walked up till he was beside the girl.

"You say you saw the Tories when they captured the two young men?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Do you know why the Tories made the capture? What excuse did they give for doing so?"

"They said they believed the young men were rebels."

"I suppose they took the young men at a disadvantage."

"Yes, indeed; they jumped out of ambush and surrounded the young men, and each Tory had a leveled rifle in his hands. It would have been sure death had the young men tried to make their escape."

"I was sure the Tories had secured a great advantage, else they would not have succeeded in capturing my comrades."

"You are right; I judged, by their looks and actions, that they are brave young men."

"You are right. They do not know the meaning of the word fear."

"Do you mind telling me who they are?"

"Not at all. One of the two is Dick Slater, the captain of this company here, which is known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.' The other is Bob Estabrook, another of the members of the company."

"The 'Liberty Boys,' you say, sir?" eagerly.

"Yes, Miss Deane."

"I have heard of you!"

"Have you?"

"Yes; and I have heard of Dick Slater. A young man who went to the war, not far from my home, was



seriously wounded, and as soon as he was able to make the trip he came home, and I heard him talking of Dick Slater and the 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Well, these are the 'Liberty Boys,' and Dick Slater is our captain."

"I am glad to know that, sir; and I am proud that I shall be instrumental in bringing about the rescue of the two brave young men."

"You will have earned their everlasting gratitude, Miss Deane, and they will never forget what you have done for them—never."

"I am glad to do this, sir; I hate the Tories, and am glad to spoil their plans."

On they moved through the timber.

The girl walked at a swift pace, and the youths kept close behind her.

Presently, however, they slackened speed, and moved forward silently as so many shadows.

They knew how to do this. Nearly all had been reared in the timber, and could move through it with the silence and celerity of the Indians.

Presently the girl made a gesture to enjoin silence and caution, and stole forward, slowly and carefully.

The youths followed suit, and presently all came to a stop near the spot where Laura had been hidden when she was watching the Tories.

The cabin was in the center of a clearing, which would make it a difficult matter to get close to it without being seen.

Another thing made it a difficult matter to do the Tories damage if the youths were to rush forward, and that was the fact that Dick and Bob were sitting on a bench in front of the cabin, and in the midst of a number of the Tories. If the "Liberty Boys" were to shoot at the Tories they would be as likely to wound their comrades as any of the enemy.

"I'll tell you what let's do," said Mark Morrison, in a whisper to his comrade on the left; "let's surround the clearing, and in that way we will be able to keep the scoundrels from getting away."

"That's a good scheme," was the reply.

"Pass the word on around, Sam," whispered Mark, "and I will start it around this other way."

"All right."

In a few moments all the "Liberty Boys" knew what was to be done, and then they began circling around, with the intention of surrounding the clearing.

Unfortunately, however, one of the Tories happened to be out in the timber on an errand of some kind, and he caught sight of the party of "Liberty Boys."

He hastened around till he was behind the cabin, and then left the protection of the timber and ran to the cabin, the "Liberty Boys" not seeing him till he reached the cabin.

"Quick, men!" the Tory cried, pantingly. "Theer's a big force uv rebels out heer in ther timber, an' they're try-

in' ter surroun' ther clearin'! Come, quick, ef ye wanten git erway!"

Then he dashed around the cabin, and away, the other Tories following him pell mell.

The "Liberty Boys" saw what was taking place, and realizing that they could not surround the clearing in time to head the fleeing Tories off, dashed out of the timber and across the open space at the top of their speed, in an effort to catch up with the enemy.

Seeing they were not going to be able to do so, they paused as they came to the cabin, and leveling their muskets, fired a volley after the fugitives.

Two or three of the Tories gave utterance to wild yells, evidently of pain, but not one dropped, and the next moment they disappeared among the trees.

Mark Morrison and Sam Sanderson quickly freed the arms of Dick and Bob, who exclaimed in unison:

"How did you know we were here?"

Mark glanced around and saw Laura Deane approaching, across the open space.

"That girl told us where you were," he replied.

"That girl told you?" from Dick.

"How did she know?" from Bob.

"She saw the Tories capture you," replied Mark.

"Who is she?" from Dick.

"Her name is Laura Deane, and she is the daughter of a patriot who is in the patriot army."

"Well, well!"

Laura was soon at the cabin, and Mark introduced her to Dick and Bob, who gave the girl an earnest, pleasant greeting.

"My comrade here tells me that we owe our rescue from the hands of the Tories to you, Miss Deane," said Dick.

"Well, I told him where you were, Mr. Slater," was the reply.

"Which amounts to the same as your having rescued us, for had you not told our comrades where we were, they could not have come to our assistance; and we thank you sincerely, I assure you, and if it should ever come in our way to do you a favor, rest assured that we shall do it."

"Oh, you are more than welcome to what little I have done, sir," was the reply. "I am a patriot, and was only too glad of a chance to do you a favor and spoil the Tories' plans."

"We owe you a great debt, nevertheless, Miss Deane, and we shall pay it if ever we get the chance."

Then Mark explained how they had been accosted by the patriot girl, who had told them where they would find their comrades.

"I guess it would be useless to try to follow the Tories, don't you think, Dick?" asked Sam Sanderson, presently.

"Yes, indeed," said Dick. "They know the lay of the land hereabouts, and we don't. It would be foolish to try to follow them."

So it was decided to go back to the main road at once.



Dick asked Laura Deane whose cabin this one was, and she said it was simply an old, abandoned cabin, and that it had been made the headquarters, seemingly, of the Tories.

"Let's burn the thing down," said Bob Estabrook.

The other youths were in favor of this, and so Dick told them to go ahead.

The youths did so, and ten minutes later the cabin was on fire.

The wood was dry, and it did not take long for it to get under good headway.

The "Liberty Boys" remained long enough to make sure that the cabin was burning so fiercely it could not be saved, and then they made their way back toward the main road, Dick and Bob leading their horses.

When they reached the road they bade Laura Deane good-by, mounted, and rode away.

By riding at a gallop, they managed to enter Wyoming Valley just as the sun was setting.

Half an hour later they arrived at Forty Fort, and were given a warm welcome by Colonel Zebulon Butler, who was the commander of the little force of three hundred soldiers.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE "LIBERTY BOYS" ARRIVE AT FORTY FORT.

The colonel was surprised at the arrival of the "Liberty Boys," however.

He had had no hint of their coming, and when he was told why they were there he was greatly surprised.

"You say that General Washington heard rumors that a force of Tories and Indians were coming down into the Wyoming Valley from New York, with the intention of falling upon the patriot families and massacring them, Captain Slater?" he exclaimed, as, after supper, they were seated in his private room in the fort, talking.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick. "That is the reason he sent us here."

"Well, well! That is strange; we have had no hint of danger here."

"Well, it may be that there was nothing in the rumors," said Dick.

"I hope so. It would certainly be a terrible thing if it should turn out that there was truth in the rumor."

"Yes; and now, with your permission, Colonel Butler, I think I will go out on a scouting expedition."

"What! To-night?"

"Yes."

"Very well; you may go, of course, if you like, but I do not think it at all necessary."

"Perhaps it is not; but it will do no harm to be careful, and keep a sharp lookout, sir."

"True. Well, don't get lost; you are a stranger in these parts, and do not know the lay of the land."

"I am an expert woodsman, however, sir."

So Dick left the colonel's room, and made his way to where the "Liberty Boys" were quartered.

He told them he was going out on a scouting expedition.

Bob wanted to go along, but Dick said he preferred going alone, and so he made his way out of the fort and away, through the darkness.

The youth had no particular plan in his mind. He simply wished to move around and see if he could discover anything.

He had made inquiries of Colonel Butler, and learned that while the majority of the families in the valley were patriot families, there were some who were not, and it was his belief that if there was a plan on foot to have a force of Tories and Indians fall upon the patriot families, some of the Tory families might have knowledge of the fact, and by playing the spy he might learn something definite regarding the matter.

Here and there up and down the Valley Dick saw the glimmer of lights, and he headed toward the nearest one.

Presently he came to the house.

It was a good-sized log house, and Dick made his way to the window through which the light shone, and looked in.

He was looking into the sitting-room, and saw a woman and three children of perhaps six to fourteen years of age.

There was no man to be seen, and the "Liberty Boy" guessed this was the home of a patriot, and that the man was away, in the ranks of the patriot army.

He did not lose any more time here, but made his way in the direction of another light which he saw shining through the darkness ahead.

On reaching the house where this light was Dick made his way to the window and looked in, as he had done at the other.

There were two women in the sitting-room, one an old lady, the other perhaps forty years of age; and there were two girls, one about six, the other eight or nine years of age. There was no man to be seen.

"Another patriot family," thought Dick. "Well, there is nothing to be learned here. I will travel onward and find the home of a Tory; then I may learn something."

He lost no time in making his way toward another light which he saw shining in the distance.

Ten minutes later he was standing, looking into a sitting-room, and this time he saw a man was present. There was, in addition to the man, a woman, and a boy of perhaps fifteen years.

The man was a rough-looking fellow, roughly dressed in blue homespun, and the boy was ill-favored also, looking much like the man, who was evidently his father. The woman was not bad-looking, and it was evident that she stood in awe of her husband, for she acted as though afraid of him.

Some kind of a discussion was going on between them,



and the man was evidently angry, for he shook his fist at the woman once or twice. Dick could hear the murmur of their voices, but could not understand what was being said.

He was eager to do so, however, for he guessed that this man was a Tory, and he thought it possible that if he could hear what was being said he might learn something of interest and value.

"He may know something about the contemplated move of the Tories and Indians—if any move is contemplated," thought Dick. "I must try to hear what is being said."

He made his way around the house till he came to what he judged was the kitchen door; here he paused and tried the knob.

To his surprise, and much to his delight, the door was not fastened; and he pushed it open and entered the room. He saw at once that the door between the kitchen and the sitting-room was partially open, and he walked softly across and peered through the doorway.

The words of the man and woman were easily understood now, and Dick felt that he would be able to hear something that would be of interest. He was disappointed in this, however, for just as he looked into the sitting-room he heard the man give utterance to an exclamation of rage, and saw him leap toward the woman with fist drawn back. It was evident that the fellow was going to strike the woman, and this was something Dick could not stand there and witness, so he leaped into the room, with the exclamation:

"Don't you strike her, you big brute! If you do it will be a bad thing for you!"

The woman gave utterance to a cry of mingled fear and pleasure, and the man whirled, with an exclamation of surprise and rage, and stared at Dick fiercely.

"Who air you?" he cried.

The boy had uttered an exclamation, also, and had leaped up, and stood glaring at Dick.

"It doesn't matter who I am," said Dick, quietly. "It will suffice to say that I am one who will not stand by and see a man strike a woman. Man, did I say? I should have said brute."

"Say, d'ye know who yer talkin' to?" the fellow cried, his face dark with anger, while his hands clenched and unclenched, as though eager to get hold of the daring youth who had talked so saucily to their owner.

"No, and I don't care who you are," replied Dick. "All I have to say is that you won't strike that woman while I am here."

"Thet's it; how did ye git heer?" the man cried. "Whut bizness hev ye heer? Hain't this my house?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," was the cool reply. "It may be your house for all I know."

"Et is my house; an' hain't er man got er right ter do ez he pleases in his own house?"

"He has not the right to strike a woman."

"Not ef ther womern is his own wife?"

"Most assuredly not."

"Waal, I don' know w'y not."

"It is simple enough. No one save an arrant scoundrel and coward would strike a woman; her being his wife does not give him the right to do so."

"See heer, young feller, ye hed better be keerful how ye call me names! I don't like the way ye talk, an' I've er good min' ter knock yer head off!"

"Go fur 'im, dad," said the boy. "Knock 'im down, an' I'll he'p ye throw 'im outer ther house."

"Oh, sir, you had better go away," said the woman, addressing Dick. "You will——"

"Shut yer mouth, ye fool!" roared the man. "Ye'll speak when yer spoke ter, an' ther res' uv ther time ye'll keep yer mouth shet, er ye'll wish't ye hed!"

"Have no fears on my account, madam," said Dick. "I can handle your husband easily enough, and the boy also if he attempts to take a hand."

"Oh, ye kin, hey?" the man sneered, advancing a couple of steps and glaring at Dick.

"I can."

The youth spoke calmly and confidently, and he met the fierce glare of the ruffian unflinchingly. Indeed, he rather looked the fellow out of countenance, for he was forced to turn his eyes away; the cool, masterful look in the youth's eyes was too much for him.

"Say, let's throw 'im out uv doors, dad!" the boy said, advancing toward Dick.

"Stand back, boy," said Dick. "I would not like to hurt you, because you are young and don't know much. Keep away from me."

"Ye git outer this house!" the man cried angrily. "Git out, an' right erway, too, er et won't be good fur ye!"

"Thet's ther way ter talk ter 'im, dad!" cried the boy. But he was careful not to advance any farther.

"I will go when you give me your promise that you will not strike your wife," said Dick.

"I won't giv' enny sech prommus. Et's none uv yer bizness, an' ye'll go out uv heer right erway, er ye'd wush't ye hed."

The man advanced menacingly as he spoke.

The youth waved him back.

"Don't attempt to lay your hands on me," he said warningly. "I shall defend myself, if you do, and it will be bad for you, I assure you."

But the man evidently thought he was more than a match for the youth, for he advanced to the attack. When he was close enough, he struck at the youth, who ducked slightly, letting the fellow's fist pass over his shoulder; then he struck out, and the man got a terrible blow fair between the eyes.

Down he went on his back on the floor, while a howl of pain and rage escaped him.

The boy stared in amazement and terror, and the woman looked surprised, but pleased as well.

"Served him right," she said. "He has struck me many times, and I am glad that he knows how it feels to be struck down."



The man scrambled to his feet and rushed at Dick with the ferocity of a tiger. He was evidently determined to avenge his downfall.

The "Liberty Boy" was forced to give way before the man for a few moments, and in doing so passed near where the boy stood. The boy was angry at Dick, and anxious to aid his father, and he stuck out his foot and tripped the youth.

Down went Dick with a crash, and with a snarling cry of delight the man leaped upon the youth's prostrate form.

## CHAPTER V.

### DICK IN TROUBLE AGAIN.

The boy leaped forward to help his father, but the woman now became active, and she stepped quickly forward, and seizing her son, jerked him back and held him in spite of his struggles.

"You shan't both jump onto the young man," the woman said, determinedly. "That was a mean trick you played, Dave Rock."

"Uv course ye'd say so," the boy snarled. "Let go uv me, I tell ye!"

But the woman would not let go, and as she was strong, she managed to hold the boy.

Meanwhile Dick and the man were having a hot struggle.

Although taken at a great disadvantage, Dick did not for one moment give up hope of coming out the victor. The man was strong, true, but he was awkward and slow, while Dick was quick as lightning, and like an eel in his movements. Indeed, he was a trained athlete, and so toughened by exposure and outdoor life that he could not be made tired in a contest of strength.

It was a lively struggle, but presently Dick managed to turn his opponent, and get on top.

"Now, I have you where I want you," he said, sternly. "You are now at my mercy, and if you don't give me the promise I asked you to give I will give you the worst thrashing you have ever had in all your life!"

"Lemme loose!" the boy cried, kicking and struggling. "Lemme loose! Whut d'ye mean, ennyhow? Air ye goin' ter hold me an' let thet feller poun' dad all ter pieces?"

"He needs a good pounding," said the woman, "and I am going to hold you while he gives it to Dan."

"I'll kill ye, ole woman, fur thet!" the man cried fiercely.

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Dick. "You will not kill her, nor will you strike her any more, for I shall be here in the valley for quite a while, and if you maltreat her, and I find it out, I will come here and thrash you within an inch of your life."

"Oh, ye wull, hey?"

"Yes."

"Whar ye stayin'?"

"At the fort. And, madam, if your husband treats you roughly, send word to Dick Slater, at the fort, and I will come at once, and attend to his case."

"Air ye Dick Slater?" the man cried.

"That is my name."

"I've heerd uv ye."

"Well, then, perhaps you know that I mean what I say."

"Mebby ye do, but doin' all ye say is anuther matter."

"Oh, I think I shall be able to do most all I say I can do."

"Mebby not; now let me up, Dick Slater."

"If you will give me your promise not to strike your wife again, or maltreat her in any way."

"I will not prommus ye ennythin'."

The "Liberty Boy" raised his fist and held it threateningly in front of the man's nose.

"I guess you had better promise," he said.

"I won't do et," doggedly.

"I shall count five, and if you don't say you will promise before I have counted that number I shall give you a blow that will make you see more stars than you ever saw before at one time."

"Ye hit me an' et'll be ther worst thing ye ever done in all yer life!"

"Promise!" said Dick.

Before the man could reply there came the sound of footsteps, and into the room, coming from the kitchen, as Dick had come, came half a dozen rough-looking men.

They leaped forward and seized Dick as he sprang to his feet, and they overpowered him before he could draw a weapon with which to defend himself.

Then Dick saw the leader of the party was the same man who had been the leader of the party of twenty Tories that had captured Bob and himself, that afternoon. The five men with the fellow were some of the same men that had been with him at that time.

"Ah, ha; we've got ye erg'in, young feller!" Ben Rock cried, a fierce look of joy on his face. "We've got ye erg'in, an' I think thet this time we'll keep ye." Then he turned to the man Dick had had down when they entered, and said:

"Whut wuz ther trubble, Dan?"

"There trubble wuz thet this heer blamed Dick Slater is interferin' whar he hain't got no bizness, thet's ther trubble, an' he knocked me down an' raised er lump onter my head; an' I'm ergoin' ter do ther same thing ter him, thet's whut I'm goin' ter do!"

He advanced toward Dick, whose arms were fastened, and drew back his arm threateningly, but Ben Rock pushed him back.

"Hol' on, Dan," he said. "We'll atten' ter this feller's case in due time. But did I unnerstan' ye ter say he is Dick Slater?"

"Thet's jes' whut ye did; he tole me thet wuz his name."

Ben Rock turned an inquiring look on the prisoner.

"Air ye Dick Slater, shore enuff?" he asked.



"That is my name."

"An' wuz them fellers we saw at ther cabin, this arternoon, ther 'Liberty Boys'?"

"Yes, they were the 'Liberty Boys.'"

"An' then I owe ter ther 'Liberty Boys' ther burnin' uv my cabin, hey?"

"Yes; the cabin was burned down by my boys."

"I'll git even with ye fur thet."

"Perhaps."

"Theer hain't no perhaps erbout et. I'm goin' ter settle with ye; but furst I want ye ter tell me w'y ye an' yer 'Liberty Boys' hev come heer ter ther Wyomin' Valley?"

"We have come here to make such scoundrels as you fellows behave yourselves," was the calm reply.

"An' d'ye think ye'll be able ter do et?"

"I think so."

"Waal, ye'll fin' yer mistake, young feller."

"Is that so?"

"Yas. But I'm thinkin' ye hev some other reason fur comin' heer jes' at this time."

"What other reason could we have?"

"Ye know, all right, and I want ye ter tell me."

"Well, you will have to keep on wanting."

"Ye won' tell?"

"There is nothing to tell more than what I have already told."

"I don' berleeve ye."

"Well, you needn't believe me if you don't want to do so."

"I don' berleeve ye; ye air heer fur some other reason, an' I want ter know whut et is."

"I have told you all there is to tell. And I will now add that it will be for your interest to set me free and let me go away from here in peace."

"Oh, ye think ye kin make me berleeve thet?"

"I don't know whether you will believe it or not, but it is the truth, just the same."

"Whut'll happen ef we don't set ye free?"

"My 'Liberty Boys' will come here and kill or capture the last one of you."

"They won't know where ter look fur ye."

"Oh, yes they will."

"Bah, ye kain't skeer me."

"I am not trying to scare you, but am telling you the truth; that is all."

"Waal, ye mought jes' ez well save yer breath."

"You won't set me free, then?"

"No; we've got ye, an' we're goin' ter keep ye; and whut is more, I'm goin' ter git even with ye, arter erwhile, fur burnin' my cabin."

"Why wait?"

"Becos I hev some bizness with my brother, heer, w'ich I mus' 'tend ter furst; then I'll be reddy ter 'tepd ter yer case."

"Say, Ben," said the fellow who owned the house they were in, "whut air ye goin' ter do with ther young scoundril—hang 'im?"

"I haven't decided yit; but likely thet's whut I'll do ter 'im."

Then he turned to the five men who had accompanied him into the house and assisted in making a prisoner of Dick.

"Take Dick Slater out uv doors and keep 'im heer fur erwhile," he said. "I wanter hev er talk with Dan, an' don' want ther rebel ter heer whut I say."

"All right," replied one, and then two of them seized hold of Dick's arms and half dragged him out of the house.

"Say, Ben," said Dan Rock, when the others had gone out of doors, "whut did ye mean when ye spoke uv yer cabin bein' burnt down by Dick Slater an' his 'Liberty Boys'?"

"Jes' whut I said, Dan," and then Ben Rock explained how he and his companions had captured Dick Slater and another youth that afternoon, and how they had been rescued by a party of at least one hundred men.

Then the two went over to one corner of the room and began conversing in low tones; they glanced toward Mrs. Rock occasionally, and it was evident by their actions that they did not want that she should know what they were talking about.

The truth of the matter was that the woman was a patriot, and they knew it; and this was one reason Dan Rock treated her in such a brutal manner. Indeed, Dan was going to beat her when Dick interfered because she expressed patriotic sentiments.

The boy, Dave, followed the men outside, and it was plain that he was looking forward to the time when they would punish the prisoner for striking Dan Rock.

After Ben and Dan Rock had conversed a few minutes, Dan turned to his wife, and called out, in an imperative voice:

"Bring me my whisky bottle, ole woman; I'm thirsty."

The woman went to a cupboard, and drawing forth a black bottle, took it to her husband, who jerked it out of her hand and ordered her to get away.

She did so, and he handed the bottle to Ben, who took a big drink; then he followed suit.

"Now we kin talk better," he said, smacking his lips. "Whut wuz thet ye wuz sayin', Ben?"

The other did not make a reply, for at this moment there came an interruption. Dave Rock rushed into the house, with the loud cry:

"Ther pris'ner's escaped! Dick Slater hez got erway! Dick Slater hez got erway!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### DICK ESCAPES.

Dick Slater was not the youth to remain a prisoner if he could succeed in making his escape.



The instant he heard Ben Rock order the men to lead him out of doors, he made up his mind that he would make his escape, if such a thing was possible.

His hands were tied, true, but his feet were not, and he was sure he could run faster than these Tories, even with his hands bound together behind his back.

He would be willing to risk it, anyway, if the opportunity presented itself.

If he could manage to get away without being shot down he would be able to get clear away, he was sure.

They passed through the kitchen and out of doors.

"Now, don' ye try enny tricks, young feller," said one of the Tories.

"What do you mean?"

"Ye know whut I mean?"

"You are mistaken; I don't know what you mean? What tricks could I play?"

"Waal, ye c'u'd try ter git erway frum us."

Dick laughed ironically.

"I might try," he said; "but I guess that is all it would amount to. How could I hope to get away from five of you, and with my hands tied?"

"Waal, ye couldn' do et, uv course; but I thort I mought ez well warn ye, fur I didn' know but ye mought try et."

"Oh, that would be foolish."

"Yas, so et would."

Even while talking, Dick was looking around him, and taking stock of his surroundings. He was getting ready to make a dash for liberty.

Two of the Tories had hold of him, but he could tell that they did not have a very tight grip on his arms, and he believed he would have no trouble in breaking away.

He did not know how long or how short a time the two men in the cabin might spend in conversation, and his idea was that it would be best not to fool away any time, but to make the break at once.

So of a sudden he jerked with all his might, and managed to tear his arms loose from the hold of the two Tories.

Then he darted away, and was around the corner of the house almost before the Tories knew what had taken place.

Then they uttered cries of anger and surprise, and dashed after the youth.

And Dave Rock, the boy, who had just come out of the house, rushed in with the information that the prisoner had escaped.

Ben and Dan Rock uttered exclamations of rage and dashed out of the house by way of the kitchen.

Of course, when they got out of doors, they could neither see nor hear anything of the fugitive or of their comrades.

"He went aroun' ther corner uv ther house," volunteered Dave Rock.

The two men dashed around the house, and in the darkness ahead they heard the sound of excited voices and running feet.

They rushed in the same direction.

"Ketch 'im!" cried Ben Rock. "Ketch 'im! Don' let 'im git erway!"

The five were doing their best to catch Dick, but to their surprise they found that they could not gain on him at all.

They were pretty good runners, but they were no match for the "Liberty Boy," even when his hands were bound; and they wondered what would be the result if his hands were free.

"I guess he'd a'most fly ef his han's wuzn't tied," one said to himself.

Of course Dick headed toward the fort.

He judged that the fort was a mile distant. If he could keep from falling and hurting himself he would be able to reach the fort ahead of his enemies, and once he reached there he would be safe.

The youth could hear the patter-patter of the footsteps of his pursuers, and also the sound of their voices as they talked to one another excitedly; and he was enabled to judge whether they were overtaking him by these sounds.

He soon decided that they were not doing so. for the sounds did not grow louder or plainer.

"I'm holding my own, I think," he said to himself, "and I guess I shall be able to reach the fort in safety."

On he dashed.

After him came the Tories.

They could not see or hear Dick, but they were sure he would head for the fort, so they ran in that direction.

It was no use, however; they could not gain on the fleet-footed "Liberty Boy."

He reached the fort ahead of them, and gave the countersign, and was admitted.

The Tories heard the great gate go shut with a slam, and knew they were beaten. They realized that the prisoner had escaped, and turned and walked rapidly back in the direction of the house from which they had just come.

They met Ben and Dan Rock when they had gone perhaps a hundred yards, and explained matters.

The two were very angry, and accused the five of having been careless, which the men denied, however, and there was almost a fight between them.

They finally decided that it was foolish to quarrel, and then they walked back toward the house.

As may well be supposed, the sentinel, when he saw Dick enter the stockade, with his hands fastened together behind his back with a belt, was greatly surprised.

"Great Guns!" he gasped, as he slammed the gate shut, and fastened it; "who tied your hands?"

"A gang of Tories," replied Dick. "Unfasten them, will you, please?"

"Of course I will," and he unbuckled the belt and freed



Dick's arms. "Where did you run across the Tories?" he added.

"At a house, over in the valley."

"At a house?"

"Yes."

"Whose house was it—do you know?"

"I understood that the man's name was Rock."

"Dan Rock?"

"Yes."

"I know him. He has been over here to the fort two or three times in the past day or so, and we couldn't get much out of him. He claimed he was a patriot, though."

"Well, he lied; and he has a brother named Ben, who is a big scoundrel. It was Ben Rock and his gang that captured Bob and I this afternoon, two or three miles from the valley."

"Is that so? I didn't know Dan Rock had a brother."

"Yes; and he's a desperado of the deepest dye."

"Was he at his brother's house to-night?"

"Yes."

Then Dick made his way to the quarters occupied by Colonel Butler, who greeted him pleasantly.

"You haven't been gone very long," he said. "Did you learn anything?"

"Well, not a great deal, sir; but I found out where one Tory lives."

"Ah, did you?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Dan Rock."

The colonel started. "I know him," he said. "He has been in the fort several times. But he claimed to be a strong patriot."

"He was deceiving you, sir. He is a strong Tory."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes; and he was here to spy on you in the interests of the Tories."

"Do you really think so?"

"I am sure of it, sir."

"The scoundrel! Jove, if he comes around here again I will teach him a lesson he won't forget in a hurry!"

"Yes, if he comes." Dick emphasized the "if."

"You don't think he will come here again, then?"

"I am sure of it; you see, he knows that I am here, and he knows that I know he is a Tory, so he would naturally be afraid to risk his precious person in the fort."

"And his fears would be well founded; the scoundrel! So he was here to spy on us, was he? Well, I will send some men to his home to-morrow, and see if they can catch him and bring him to the fort. Once I have him here I will show him how I treat spies."

"I don't think it will do any good to send men there to-morrow."

"You think not?"

"That is what I think."

"What is your idea?"

"I don't believe he will be there."

"Why won't he?"

"He will be afraid to stay, after what happened to-night."

"Ah! What happened, Captain Slater?"

The youth explained how he had entered the Tory's house, and how the six Tories had come and made him a prisoner, and how he had succeeded in making his escape after all, and getting back to the fort.

"So Dan Rock has a brother, who is the leader of the band of Tories who captured you and your comrade this afternoon, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that is news; there is little doubt that you are right when you state that Dan Rock will not be at home to-morrow. But perhaps we might bag the entire party by sending some men there at once."

"We might," said Dick, "but I doubt it. They will probably suspect that this will be done, and will hasten to get away."

"Well, it won't do any harm to make the attempt, anyway."

"That is true; and if you are willing I will take a score of my 'Liberty Boys,' and go to Dan Rock's home, and see if they are still there."

"You have my permission; go along, Captain Slater, and I hope you will find the scoundrels, and succeed in making prisoners of them."

"I would like to do so, but I do not have much hope of being so fortunate."

Then Dick left the colonel's quarters, and hastened to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

He explained what he wanted, selected twenty of the youths, and five minutes later they left the stockade, and hastened away in the direction of the home of Dan Rock.

Fifteen minutes later they were at the house, and had surrounded it. Then Dick advanced and knocked upon the door, which was opened by the woman in whose behalf Dick had interceded earlier in the evening.

"Oh, it is Mr. Slater!" the woman exclaimed.

"Yes, it is Dick Slater, Mrs. Rock," said Dick. "And now, I wish to ask is your husband and his brother and the rest of the Tories here?"

The woman shook her head.

"No," she said. "They came back after you got away, but did not stay. They said you would likely be back with some of your 'Liberty Boys,' to try to capture them, and they went away."

"I suppose they didn't let you know where they went?"

"No, they didn't tell me."

## CHAPTER VII.

### SCOUTING.

Dick understood why they did not tell her. They knew she sympathized with the patriot cause, and were afraid she would tell the patriots where they had gone.



The "Liberty Boy" conversed with the woman a few minutes, and then bade her good-night, and took his departure.

"The Tories have gone, boys," he said. "It is no more than I expected. I suppose we may as well go back to the fort."

They made their way back to the fort, and Dick went to the colonel's quarters and made his report.

"So the Tories were gone, eh?" the colonel remarked. "Very well, it can't be helped."

"You are right, sir; and it is only what I expected."

"I know that is what you said; but, Captain Slater, do you really think there is a plan on foot among the Tories and Indians, to come down upon this settlement and massacre the patriot people?"

"It would not surprise me, sir, if it were true. Surely there must be something in the rumors that came to the ears of General Washington. I know he placed credence in them, or he would not have sent me here, with my 'Liberty Boys.'"

"True. Well, I hope that it will turn out that there is nothing of truth in the rumors."

"I hope it may turn out that way, sir, for it would be bad if a strong force should come here."

"True; we have, even now that you and your 'Liberty Boys' are here, only about three hundred fighting men."

"That is all, sir; and that is not a strong force."

"True enough."

Soon after this Dick bade the colonel good-night, and went to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

They were up bright and early next morning, and after breakfast Dick again visited the colonel's quarters.

"I am going on a scouting expedition, up toward the north end of the valley, colonel," he said.

"Very well, Captain Slater. Will you go alone?"

"No; my friend, Bob Estabrook, will accompany me."

"I am glad of that; if there are two of you there will not be so much danger that you may be set upon by Ben Rock and his gang of Tories and made prisoners."

"We will be on our guard all the time, sir. We know, now, that there are enemies in these parts, which we did not know yesterday, when they first appeared before us."

"True; and of course it will be more difficult to take you by surprise when you are on your guard."

"Yes, indeed."

Dick and Bob bridled and saddled their horses, and set out up the valley.

It was a beautiful morning, and the youths felt in high spirits. They were great lovers of Nature, and a horseback ride on such a morning as this was very enjoyable.

"Say, Dick, this is about the prettiest place I have ever been in," said Bob.

"It certainly is a lovely valley, Bob."

They rode onward, talking and laughing, but they were keeping their eyes open as well.

"Jove; it would be terrible if the Tories and Indians

were to come down upon the people of this valley, Dick!" said Bob.

"So it would. I hope the rumors may prove to have been unfounded."

"So do I."

The youths stopped occasionally and took observations; and they rode back and forth, across the valley, and in this way became familiar with the lay of the land.

They reached the extreme north end of the valley by noon, and paused and went into camp on the bank of the beautiful Susquehanna.

They let their horses drink in the river, and then staked them out, so they could get plenty of grass to eat.

The youths had brought food, consisting of bread and meat, with them, and sat down to eat their lunch.

They talked as they ate, and they discussed the matter of the coming of the Tories and Indians with a great deal of interest and seriousness.

"I hardly believe it possible they are thinking of coming away down here from up in New York State, just to massacre a lot of women and children, Dick," said Bob.

Dick shook his head, and looked thoughtful and serious.

"I don't know about that, Bob," he said. "You see, there are the three hundred soldiers in the fort; the Tories and Indians would be glad to get a chance at them."

"That's so; and then Indians, you know, are better satisfied to murder defenseless women and children than to fight men."

"Yes; they like it much better. There is not so much danger attached to it."

"That's a fact."

The youths ate in silence, for a few minutes, and gazed reflectively down into the blue waters of the beautiful Susquehanna.

When they had finished their meal they remained there nearly an hour, discussing their plans for the afternoon.

The question that came up for settlement was, should they go back to the fort, or should they continue onward toward the north, and see if they could learn anything regarding the Tories and Indians.

"It is almost a certainty that if the Tories and Indians are coming down in the Wyoming Valley they will come from the north," said Bob. "I am in favor of going on farther in that direction, Dick."

"All right; I'm willing."

"If we were to discover the Tories and Indians coming, we could ride back posthaste, and give warning."

"Yes; so we could."

So it was decided that they would go on toward the north.

They bridled and saddled their horses, and mounting, rode onward.

They were following a mere trail, for now they were beyond the settlement, and the road was not much used.

The youths did not mind this, however; they were used to riding through the wilderness.

They kept on for nearly two hours, but as they had trav-



eled at only a moderate pace, they had gone only about ten miles.

They decided to stop and see if they could take an observation.

They dismounted, and Dick climbed a tree and gazed all around them, but saw nothing that looked suspicious.

"See anything, Dick?" asked Bob, when his comrade came down.

"No, Bob; there were no signs of Tories or Indians, so far as I could see."

"Well, I hope that the rumors were unfounded."

"So do I; and it begins to look as though such is the case."

"So it does; but let's make a good job of to-day's work, Dick. Let's go on toward the north till we are sure there is no enemy within a day's travel of the valley."

"All right."

They mounted and rode onward.

They kept this up two hours longer, and then again paused.

Again Dick climbed a tree; and as before, when he came down he reported that he had not seen any sign of Tories or Indians.

"I guess we might as well turn around and go back, Bob," he said.

"You think the Tories and Indians are not coming, then, Dick?" asked Bob.

"It looks as though they are not."

"Well, I hope they are not."

"So do I."

"I'm ready to turn back if you are, Dick."

"All right; I think we may as well do so."

They were about to mount when they paused and stood hesitating.

"Let's walk over to the river, Bob, and take a look up the stream," said Dick. "Somehow, I think that if the Tories and Indians come, they will come down the Susquehanna in canoes."

"Do you really think so?"

"Yes."

"Then let's go over there and have a look. We might see them."

"You are right."

The youths tied their horses to trees and walked westward, till they came to the river.

They paused on the bank, and gazed toward the north.

They could see not more than a mile, the river bending at a point about that distance from them.

"Well, the river is clear, as far as we can see, Dick."

"Yes, Bob."

"I guess there are no Tories or Indians coming."

"I guess not—I hope not."

"Let's wait here a few minutes, though."

"All right; we are in no hurry."

The youths sat down on the grassy bank of the river, and gazed down into the water, and across to the farther shore, with occasional glances up the stream.

It was getting pretty well along toward evening, and finally Bob said:

"Do you suppose we will have any trouble in finding our way back to the fort?"

"In the night, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I hardly think so; our horses will follow the trail, won't they?"

"I don't know. Perhaps."

"I guess they will."

"And if they won't, what does it matter? We do not have to get back to the fort to-night."

"True; and this is such lovely weather that it will be pleasant camping out."

"So it will; more pleasant than sleeping in our quarters in the fort."

"You are right."

They remained sitting, and looked across at the farther shore and talked on.

Presently Bob glanced up the river, and as he did so an exclamation escaped his lips, and he leaped to his feet.

"Great Scott, Dick!" he gasped. "Look yonder!" and he pointed up the stream as he spoke.

Dick turned his head and looked up the stream.

Coming around the bend a mile distant were dozens of canoes, and the canoes were filled with Indians!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE "LIBERTY BOYS" AND "QUEEN ESTHER."

"The Indians are coming!" cried Dick.

"Yes, and there are a good many Tories among them, too, Dick."

"How do you know, Bob?"

"By the way they are dressed."

"Ah!"

"The Indians are easily distinguished, on account of their brilliant head-dresses, you see."

"Yes; and there are a good many in the canoes who have not head-dresses at all; they are Tories, without a doubt."

"Yes."

"Let's get away from the shore, Bob, and back a ways; they might see us and suspect that they have themselves been seen."

"Well, that wouldn't matter so very much, would it?"

"I guess not so far as the danger to ourselves is concerned; but no doubt they are intending to try to take the people of the valley by surprise, and if they were to see us they might suspect that their plan to surprise the patriots will fail."

"True."

The two stepped back and took up positions behind trees, from behind which they peered, and they kept count,



as well as they could, of the canoes, as they came around the bend in the stream.

"Jove, Dick, there are a lot of them!" said Bob, after a while.

"So there are, Bob."

The youths waited, watched, and counted.

"Jove, are they never going to stop coming?" exclaimed Bob.

"There seems to be no end to the number of canoes, Bob."

"You are right."

Presently all were around the bend, however, and then Bob asked:

"How many men, all told, are there in those canoes, do you think, Dick?"

"I would guess that there are at least one thousand."

"I believe there are more than that."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is much too strong a force for the little handful under Colonel Butler to contend with."

"Even with the fort to protect them, Dick?"

"Yes; the fort is made of logs, which are dry, and they will burn readily. The Tories and Indians will set fire to the logs, and the fort will burn down, and the soldiers will have to come forth, with the result that they will be butchered."

"Jove, we must not permit that to happen, Dick!"

"No; we must get back there as quickly as possible, and give warning of the coming of the enemy, and I shall advise that the valley be deserted, and left to the Tories and Indians, Bob."

"But where can the people go?"

"Up into the mountains, somewhere; anywhere will be safer than remaining in the valley."

"I guess that is true. Well, the canoes are coming rapidly, so we had better be getting back to our horses and making all possible speed to the valley."

"So we had. Come, Bob."

The youths turned, to make their way to where they had left their horses—only to find themselves seized by at least a score of Indians, who were rigged out in all the hideous glory of war paint and feathers.

Dick and Bob struggled fiercely, but it was no use. They were helpless in the hands of so many.

They were quickly overpowered, and their arms bound behind their backs. Then the brave who seemed to be the leader of the party of Indians, stepped to the bank of the river, and signaled the Indians in the canoes.

As for Dick and Bob, they were greatly cast down. They looked at each other in a helpless, sorrowful manner.

"This is bad, Bob," said Dick.

"Yes, Dick; it is bad not alone for us, but for——"

"Sh! Be careful what you say, Bob."

The youths said no more, but watched the approaching canoes with interest.

Presently Dick turned his eyes upon an Indian who had hold of his arm, and said:

"Indian understand white man's language?"

The Indian nodded. "Me unnerstan'," he said:

"Well, I wish to ask, where did you and brother braves come from? Why were you not in the canoes along with the others?"

"We git out canoes," was the reply. "River make big bend, away aroun'," with a comprehensive sweep of the arm. "We git out canoes an' git on groun'—come 'cross—cut off heap much long way; we git here quick—fore canoes; ugh—unnerstan'?"

"Ah, yes; you got off and cut across, the distance being much shorter than by way of the river."

"Ugh. That um."

"And it was unfortunate for us, Dick," from Bob.

"Ugh. Ketch white boys nappin'," said the Indian, with a grin.

"You certainly did," agreed Dick. "But what are you going to do with us?"

"Me not no; we see what Queen Esther say."

"Queen Esther?" exclaimed Dick, inquiringly.

"Who's she?" from Bob.

"Ugh. She heap big queen uv Seneca Injuns. Whatever she say, Injuns do—ugh!"

"Queen Esther, eh?" remarked Bob, reflectively. "Seems to me I've heard of her, Dick."

"I think I have, Bob; she is the queen of the Seneca Indians, as this one says."

"Yes, you are right. Well, I hope she'll say for them to turn us loose."

"I guess there is no such luck as that in store for us."

"I fear you are right about that."

"Ugh. White boys heap right," said the Indian. "Injuns no let white boys go."

The canoes were heading in toward the shore, and as they drew nearer it was easy to see that about half the occupants were white men.

At least a dozen of the leading canoes had no white men in them, however, and in the leading one was an old Indian woman, rigged out in all the finery so dear to their hearts.

Her hair was white as snow, the youths saw, as the boat drew nearer, and her face was seamed and wrinkled, while the black eyes shone with considerable fire.

As the canoe reached the shore, and came to a stop, a number of the Indian braves waded in, and, lifting the old Indian woman, bore her to the shore, and spreading a blanket on the grass, gave her a seat.

The other canoes made a landing, also—the dozen or so that had only Indians in them—and the braves swarmed ashore and gathered around the spot where the old hag sat, and near which stood Dick and Bob.

The other canoes came to a stop, but the occupants did not make any move to come ashore.

"What have you here, my braves?" the old Indian woman asked, nodding toward the "Liberty Boys."



"Two white boys, great queen," replied one of the Indians—the one who had done the signaling, and who was evidently the leader of the party that had captured the youths.

"Yes, yes; two white boys. What were they doing?" The old hag spoke very good English, much to the youths' surprise, for she did not look as though she would be capable of doing so. They did not know that half a century before, when this old hag was a young woman, she had been beautiful, and had been received among the best society of Philadelphia, had been petted and caressed by the wealthy and cultured women of that city, but such was the fact. A temporary painting out of the leopard's spots does not make of it another animal, however, and the temporary association with the white people did not change this woman or make her any less an Indian at heart. And now, at eighty years of age, an ugly old hag, she was the queen of the Senecas.

"White boys playin' spy," replied the Indian to the hag's question.

"Ah, they were spying on us?"

"Ugh. They lookin' up river an' talkin' 'bout canoes. We think um spies an' so we ketch um."

The old woman fixed her eyes on the face of Dick and Bob in turn, and then she said:

"Look at me. I am Queen Esther. Have you never heard of me?"

"I think we have, Queen," was Dick's reply.

"Then you know that I am queen of the Senecas, and that with them my word is law."

"We may have heard something to that effect, queen, though I am not positive."

"It is the truth; and at a word from me, they will split your heads with their tomahawks!"

"I hope you will not speak the word, Queen."

"That depends upon yourselves, I think. Answer me, who are you?"

"We are a couple of young men who live a few miles from here, Queen," was Dick's answer.

"What were you doing here on the bank of the stream?"

"Nothing in particular, Queen. We just happened to come here, but when we saw the canoes coming down the river, of course we looked at them. We could not help being interested."

"Of course, I understand that. But tell me, are you not from the Valley of Wyoming?"

The youths both shook their heads. It was something they must not do—acknowledge that they were from the valley, for that would insure their being held prisoners, or even being put to death, for they knew this force of Tories and Indians was on its way to Wyoming Valley to massacre the settlers.

"No, we are not from the Wyoming Valley," replied Dick. He considered it no sin to tell a falsehood under the circumstances.

"Are you sure that you are not speaking with a crooked tongue?" the old hag asked, eyeing the youth sharply.

"Oh, yes, quite sure," said Dick, with apparent frankness. "I would not attempt to deceive you, great Queen."

"It would be useless to try to do so, for I would know it if you did," the old hag declared.

"Of course you would know it," said Dick.

At this moment two braves approached, leading Dick's and Bob's horses.

Of course, the Indians knew the animals must belong to the two prisoners, and there was a great jabbering in the Indian tongue. One of the Indians talked with Queen Esther for quite a while, and then she again turned her eyes upon the "Liberty Boys."

"I think white boys have spoken to the queen with crooked tongues," she said.

"Why so, Queen?" asked Dick.

"There are white boys' horses, are they not?" nodding toward the horses.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Well, if white boys lived around here, they would not have ridden to the river, and they would not have horses like those," pointing. "They are not work-horses; they are fine riding-horses."

"Very true; they are not work-horses," Dick acknowledged. "They are riding-horses, but that doesn't make any difference."

"Yes; it makes much difference; no farmer boys have horses like those. You two boys have spoken with crooked tongues; you are enemies of the king, and of the Indians!"

At this moment a white man strode through the crowd of Indians surrounding the queen, and he said, in a loud, hoarse voice:

"Yer right, Queen Esther; them theer two young fellers air pizen rebels!"

The newcomer was Ben Rock, the leader of the band of twenty Tories that had captured Dick and Bob the afternoon before.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DOWN THE SUSQUEHANNA.

The old Indian woman greeted Ben Rock in a friendly manner, and it was evident that they had met before.

She asked him what he meant by saying they were rebels, and he explained, telling all about Dick and Bob, who they were, and everything.

A leading Tory, by the name of Johnson, had made a landing by this time, and he and Ben Rock shook hands, and the latter explained to Johnson who Dick and Bob were.

"Ha! so this is the famous Dick Slater, eh?" exclaimed the Tory leader, eyeing Dick with interest.

"Yas, thet's Dick Slater," said Ben Rock, proud that he had been able to come here and give them so much information.



"Queen," said Johnson, "I am going to ask that you let me have the prisoners."

But the old Indian woman did not seem willing to do this.

She shook her head. "The young white men were captured by my braves," she said. "They belong to my braves. I shall not give the prisoners up."

A frown came over Johnson's face, and it was evident that he could scarcely keep from saying something that would have aroused anger among the Indian warriors.

But he did not wish to do this. He was depending on the Indians to help the Tories murder the patriots of Wyoming Valley, and he could not afford to take the chances of making them so angry that they would refuse to assist in the work.

So he bit his lips, and said:

"Very well; but I must ask that you make sure the prisoners do not escape."

"Oh, you may rest assured that they will not be permitted to escape," said Queen Esther.

"If they were to do so, they might succeed in getting to Wyoming Valley and warning the settlers there of our coming, you know."

"Yes, I know that. The prisoners will not be permitted to escape."

Then followed a discussion, which the two "Liberty Boys" were not permitted to hear, they being conducted away to such a distance as to place them out of earshot, and the discussion was carried on between Johnson, Ben Rock, and Queen Esther for awhile, after which another Tory by the name of John Butler came ashore and took part in the council. He was really the leader of the expedition.

Half an hour later Dick and Bob were placed in one of the canoes, and all the Indians and Tories got in—with the exception of two, who were to ride the horses of Dick and Bob—and the voyage down the river was resumed.

It grew dark when the flotilla of canoes was still two or three miles from the extreme north end of Wyoming Valley, however, and the canoes headed in to the shore, and a landing was made.

Soon campfires were blazing, and the odor of cooking meat filled the air, and made Dick and Bob very hungry.

Soon after the camp had been made, the two Indians who were riding Dick's and Bob's horses arrived, and picketed the animals out.

The youths saw the Indians when they arrived, and noted where the horses were picketed.

"If we can only manage to make our escape, Dick," whispered Bob, "we might get to the valley and warn the people, after all."

"Yes, but that is the trouble, Bob. It seems to me that there is absolutely no chance for us to make our escape."

"I guess you are right about that; we are in the midst of more than a thousand Tories and Indians."

"Yes, and they will place a guard over us to-night, which will make it useless for us to attempt to escape."

"And likely our ankles will be bound, as well as our hands."

"No doubt of it."

The youths thought they were not to have anything to eat, for everybody else in the camp, Indians as well as whites, had eaten their fill before any attention was paid to the prisoners. Then a couple of braves brought them some meat, and after tying the youths' ankles, their hands were freed, and they were given the meat, which they ate with a relish, for they were hungry.

When they had finished, their wrists were again bound, but the bonds were not taken off their ankles.

"You see," whispered Bob, "we are to be left trussed up this way, just like turkeys that are being taken to market."

"I guess you are right, Bob."

"We are in for it."

"Yes; but what will happen to us is not the worst of it."

"No, indeed; the trouble is that they will descend upon the settlers of Wyoming Valley, and murder them by wholesale."

"Yes, it is bad, our being held prisoners."

The Tory leader of the expedition, John Butler, advanced to the point where Dick sat, and stopping, eyed them with considerable interest.

"So you are Dick Slater, are you?" he remarked, addressing Dick.

"That is my name," was the quiet reply.

"And you are the captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

"Yes."

"So Ben Rock told me."

Then Butler asked a great many questions, trying to get information regarding General Washington and the patriot army; but he might as well have spared himself the trouble. Dick was not the youth to give an enemy any information. He saw a chance to do some good to the great cause of liberty, however, by telling some things that were not true, and when the conversation finally ended Butler went away, thinking that there was grave doubt in regard to the king ultimately triumphing over the patriots.

"Say, you gave that Tory rascal something to think about, Dick," said Bob, with a grin. "You put a good-sized bee in his bonnet."

"Yes, I think I impressed him somewhat."

"You certainly did; and I'm glad you told him what you did. If you can get the enemy to over-rating the patriot forces' strength it will be a big help to us, and will make us able to thrash them, where otherwise it would be impossible to do so."

"True."

The youths wondered if the Tories and Indians were going to remain in camp at this spot all night. They hoped so, as it would delay the attack on the settlers of the valley just that much longer, and would give Dick and Bob more time to try to make their escape.



They did not have much hope of being able to do this, however.

Soon the Tories and Indians lay down and went to sleep, with the exception of the sentinels, and of a party of six Indians who stood guard over Dick and Bob.

A blanket was spread on the ground, and the youths were placed on the blanket.

They remained awake, and waited patiently till the campfires died down, and the darkness shadowed all, and then they began working at their bonds, in the hope that they might succeed in getting their hands and legs free.

They made but little, if any progress, however. The Indians had done their work too well.

Still the "Liberty Boys" persevered. They felt that a great deal depended on their making their escape and carrying the news to the settlement of the coming of the enemy.

In the end, however, they were forced to give up, for the Indians on guard finally discovered that the two were not asleep, but were trying to free themselves, and they came and in guttural voices told Dick and Bob they had better stop working at their bonds and go to sleep.

The youths gave up hope, then, of being able to free their hands and feet and make their escape, and desisted.

"I guess it would be foolish to try any more, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes; the Indians know what we have been trying to do, and even if we were to succeed in getting our hands and feet free, we could not escape."

"You are right; we would simply be tied up again, and tighter than ever."

"Yes; so we would."

They straightened out, then, and were soon asleep, for they knew that they would need to be wide awake and alert on the morrow.

The camp was astir long before daylight, and breakfast was cooked and eaten. And then, just as the first faint gray of early morning was beginning to steal over the eastern horizon the Tories and Indians again embarked in their bark canoes upon the bosom of the Susquehanna.

Dick and Bob were placed in one of the canoes, bound hand and foot. Dick protested.

"If the canoe were to upset we would be drowned," he said. "Free our hands and feet."

But the Indians refused to do so.

"Canoe no be upset," replied one.

"Queen Esther" rode, as on the afternoon before, in the leading canoe.

About nine o'clock the north end of the Wyoming Valley was reached, and the canoes were headed in toward the shore.

The Tories and Indians landed, and drew all the canoes up out of the water.

Then a council was held between the Tory leaders, the Indian chiefs, and Queen Esther, who represented the Senecas.

It was decided to start right down the valley, spreading

out as they went, and murdering the patriots and burning their homes.

It was a cold-blooded affair, coldly and heartlessly planned, by as nearly human fiends as history has any record of.

Dick and Bob had been placed on the shore, and their ankles had been freed, in order to let them walk up the embankment, to save the Indians the labor of carrying them.

Just as the council was finished, the two Indians who were riding the "Liberty Boys' " horses, rode up, and dismounted.

The two youths had been working at the bonds on their wrists all morning, and had at last succeeded in getting them loosened somewhat, but not sufficiently to enable them to get their hands free.

Presently a guard of six Indians were placed over Dick and Bob, and then the entire force of Tories and Indians started down the valley.

The six Indians who were left behind to guard the two prisoners glared at Dick and Bob with eyes of hate; it was plain that they were angry because they were forced to stay behind, and there was no doubt that they would have murdered the youths had it been left to them.

Scarcely half an hour elapsed, and then the sound of firing was heard.

"The advance of the Tories and Indians has been discovered, Bob!" cried Dick, joyously.

"Yes, Dick; the fight has begun, and we are not there to take part in it."

There was a world of disappointment in Bob's voice.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE "LIBERTY BOYS" ALARMED.

"What do you think about it, boys, anyway?"

"I think it strange they haven't come back."

"So do I."

"And I."

"They didn't intend to stay away so long, did they, Mark?"

"No, and Dick and Bob usually do what is expected of them."

"You are right. I'm afraid something has happened to them."

"I would not be surprised if they have been captured by that band of Tories."

"It is possible, of course; but I hardly think it probable, for they would be on their guard."

"Yes; but even then they might be taken at such a disadvantage that they could not prevent themselves from being made prisoners."

It was the morning after the one on which the two



"Liberty Boys," Dick and Bob, had ridden away, to go on a scouting expedition.

The "Liberty Boys" who had been left behind, at Forty Fort, were discussing the non-return of the two.

They had expected that the two would return the evening before, and they had not done so; and now it was morning, and they were still absent.

A full day had passed, and the youths were oppressed with the fear that their comrades had met with trouble of some kind.

They discussed the matter for some time, and then Mark Morrison said:

"I'll tell you what let's do, boys."

"What?"

"Tell us."

"Let us hear at once, old man."

"Out with it."

"Yes, if you have a good suggestion to offer, don't waste a moment in doing it, Mark."

"The suggestion is this: That we go in search of Dick and Bob."

"I'm in for it!"

"Just the thing!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Hurrah! let's go!"

"All right; I'll go and ask permission of Colonel Butler for us to go," said Mark. "I am sure he will let us go, however, so you might as well be bridling and saddling the horses and getting ready."

"Yes, yes!"

"We'll be ready by the time you come back."

"Yes, and I'll have your horse ready for you, Mark," from Sam Sanderson.

"All right; much obliged."

Then Mark hastened to the quarters occupied by the colonel.

The orderly showed him into the colonel's private room.

"Ah, you are one of the 'Liberty Boys,' I believe?" the officer remarked.

"Yes, sir; my name is Mark Morrison."

"Very well. What can I do for you, Mr. Morrison?"

"You know our captain, Dick Slater, and one of the 'Liberty Boys,' Bob Estabrook by name, went away on a scouting expedition yesterday morning, sir?"

"Yes."

"Well, you are aware that they have not returned?"

A sober look came over the colonel's face.

"Yes, I am aware of that," he acknowledged.

"Well, sir, we boys have been talking the matter over, and we have made up our minds that the two have been captured by the Tories."

The colonel nodded his head slowly.

"I have begun to fear so, myself," he said. "As I understood it, they were to have returned yesterday evening."

"That is the way we understood it, too, sir."

"Yes; and as they have not returned, it would begin to look as though they had met with bad luck of some kind."

"That is what we are afraid of, sir, and I have come to ask a favor of you."

"What is it, my boy?"

"That you permit the 'Liberty Boys' to go in search of the two."

"Certainly; you are welcome to do so, Mr. Morrison; indeed, I shall be glad to have you do so. Will you go at once?"

"At once, sir. I took the liberty to tell the boys to be getting ready, for I was sure you would give your consent to our going."

"Quite right. Well, I hope you will find your comrades, and that nothing has happened to them."

"Thank you, sir; I hope so, sir."

Then Mark saluted and withdrew.

"What did he say?" was the query, as soon as Mark got back to where the youths were.

"He said we may go."

"Good! Good!"

"Hurrah!"

"I thought he would say so."

"Well, we are ready to start, Mark."

"The horses are all saddled, eh?"

"Yes."

"Have you examined your weapons, to see that they are all in order?"

"Yes, yes."

"All right; lead the horses out of the stockade, and then we will mount and get away in a hurry."

The youths obeyed, and soon had led the horses through the big gateway and outside, where the youths could mount. They leaped into the saddles, the word was given, and they dashed away toward the north at a gallop.

They were eager to get to where they would begin looking for signs of Dick and Bob.

An hour later they had reached the northern end of the valley, and just as they were about to ride into the timber a party of Tories and Indians came in sight.

"Enemies!" cried Mark. "Fire, 'Liberty Boys'!—fire!"

The youths leveled their muskets and fired a volley, dropping some of the Tories and Indians, even though the distance was great.

Of course the Tories returned the fire, as did some of the Indians—those having firearms. There were few, however, the majority having bows and arrows.

Having fired off their muskets, the "Liberty Boys" retired a distance of half a mile, reloading their muskets as they went.

Then they came to a stop and waited for the enemy to again come in range.

While doing this, Mark Morrison turned to one of the youths and said:

"You ride at the top of your horse's speed to the fort, Dan, and give the alarm. Tell the colonel a large force is coming, and that his men had better come forth and help us hold the scoundrels in check."



"All right, Mark," and the "Liberty Boy" rode away at a gallop.

The Tories and Indians were now in range, and again the "Liberty Boys" fired a volley, and dashed away.

And again the Tories and Indians fired, the bullets rattling around like hail.

Some of the youths were wounded, but luckily not one was killed.

Mark Morrison called a halt when they had gone half a mile, the youths having reloaded their muskets while going at full speed—something that had required a great deal of practice in the learning.

Mark now detached two "Liberty Boys," and told them to ride on, one going to the righthand and one to the lefthand, and warn the settlers of the coming of the Tories and Indians.

"Tell them to hasten out of the valley and up into the mountains," he instructed. "I don't think it will be safe to go to the fort, for I don't believe that it will be possible to hold the enemy at bay, even after the fort has been reached."

The two youths dashed away to attend to the work, and then the others fired another volley at the Tories and Indians and again retreated quickly, reloading their muskets as they went.

Of course, the Tories and Indian returned the fire, as before, and this time two of the "Liberty Boys" were killed.

"Two of the boys are down, Mark!" said Sam Sanderson, who was near Mark Morrison.

"Yes, Sam," was the reply, in a tense, hard voice; "two as brave boys as ever leveled a musket. Well, we'll make those scoundrelly Tories and Indians pay dearly for the lives of our comrades."

"So we will!"

The "Liberty Boys" fought desperately after that, contesting every foot of the ground, and they killed many of the Tories and Indians.

At last they were joined by the three hundred men under Colonel Butler, and then it became a battle royal.

The patriots were outnumbered at least three to one, but they stood their ground and stubbornly contested every foot of the ground. They fought desperately, for they realized that the lives of scores of innocent women and children depended upon whether they could hold the red and white demons in check.

The two "Liberty Boys" who had been sent to warn the patriot settlers' families to flee for their lives, did their work well, but in spite of the youths' advice that the women and children fly up into the mountains, many went to the fort. They seemed to think they would be safe there, even though the youths told them they would not be.

Slowly but surely the brave defenders of the valley were forced back.

They were up against a force that was too strong for them, and had to go back; they could not help it, though they fought as men never fought before.

They killed many of the Tories and Indians, but there

were others to take the places of those who fell, and it did not seem to stay their advance in the least. On the other hand, when one of the patriot soldiers went down, there was no one to take his place, and thus gradually the ranks of the defenders were thinned out.

Slowly but surely the patriots were forced back, until at last the fort was reached, and then they passed through the stockade, and into the fort—with the exception of the "Liberty Boys." They said they could keep out of the Tories' and Indians' way, they being on horseback, and that they could retard the progress of the enemy to some extent, and thus give the women and children in the lower end of the valley more time to make their escape.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DICK AND BOB DO GOOD WORK.

"Say, Dick, we must get away from here!"

"Yes; but how are we going to manage it, Bob?"

"I have my hands almost free, and I will free them suddenly, and make a break for liberty; that will attract the attention of the redskins to me, and while they are trying to shoot or catch me you make your escape."

"Wait a minute, Bob; I have my hands almost free, also, and we will both free our hands at the same time, and make a concerted attack on the Indians."

"All right; there are only six of them, and by taking them by surprise, I think we can get the better of them."

"Yes; we will knock down the two nearest us, seize their tomahawks, and split the heads of the other four."

"All right; you give the word when you are ready."

"I will."

The six Indians who had been left on guard over Dick and Bob were so excited over the sound of the firing, and the yelling that came to their hearing that they had for the time being forgotten the presence of the two prisoners, seemingly.

They were craning their necks and looking in the direction in which the force of Tories and Indians had gone, and it was evident that they were wishing they were with their comrades.

Their attention was attracted in that direction to such an extent that it gave Dick and Bob the chance to indulge in the conversation as given above. Of course, the youths talked in low, cautious whispers.

Dick worked fiercely at the bonds binding his hands, and presently nodded to Bob, and said, in a whisper:

"Ready, Bob; free your hands, and go for the red demons!"

As he spoke he wrenched his own hands free. Bob did the same. Then they leaped to their feet and bounded toward the two Indians standing nearest them. Then they dealt the redskins a blow behind the ear. Seizing their tomahawks, they bounded toward the four remaining guards, who whirled, they having heard the sound of the fall of their comrades' bodies.

As they whirled, two received the edges of the toma-



hawks in their foreheads, and sank to the ground, a gasping groan being the only sound they gave utterance to.

The other two started to draw their tomahawks, at the same time giving vent to wild war-crys, but they were not quick enough. The youths dealt them blows with the tomahawks, and dropped them to the ground, dead.

Then the youths turned to find the two redskins they had knocked down just scrambling to their feet.

"Let's make a clean sweep of it, Dick!" cried Bob, bounding toward one of the redskins.

Dick followed suit, and the next moment the two Indians again sunk to the ground, this time to stay, for their heads were hit with their own tomahawks.

"Now we are free!" cried Bob, in delight; "and yonder are our horses. The trouble is that we have no weapons, save these tomahawks."

"There are the bows and arrows of the Indians, Bob."

"No bows and arrows for me, Dick. But, say; we will find some dead and wounded Tories down the valley, I am sure, and we can take their weapons."

"True. Well, let's mount and get away from here, to where we can take a hand in this business."

"All right."

The two hastened to where their horses were, and mounting, rode away, heading toward the south. The Tories and Indians were two miles away, but the youths soon came to where several Tories and Indians lay dead and dying.

"Now we can arm ourselves, Dick," said Bob.

They leaped to the ground, and helped themselves to pistols and ammunition. Then each took a musket, and reloading it, leaped into the saddles and dashed away.

"We must get around past the enemy in some manner, Bob," said Dick.

"Yes, but how are we going to do it?"

"We will ride away around to the left, go up into the timber along the mountain-side, and in this way we will be able to get around the enemy, and appear in front of the scoundrels."

"You are right. I believe we can succeed in doing it that way."

The youths rode at a gallop, and gradually neared the side of the valley. They reached the edge of the valley when they were about opposite Forty Fort. The patriot soldiers had already entered the fort, and the Tories and Indians had scattered out, and many of them were rushing in various directions, in squads of twenty to fifty. Each of these parties headed toward the cabin of a patriot settler.

The "Liberty Boys" were riding hither and thither, firing at the Tories and Indians, and making it as hot for them as possible, but of course eighty-five to ninety youths could not stay the work of one thousand human fiends.

The scene soon became a terrible one, indeed.

The demons would surround a cabin, drag the women and children forth—if they had not already taken refuge in flight—and murder them, after which they would set fire to the cabin.

Soon buildings were blazing in many parts of the valley. Many women and children were overtaken as they were attempting to flee to the timber and mountains, and were shot or cut down in cold blood.

The "Liberty Boys" made every effort to prevent such horrible work, but could not cover all the ground, and so were in many instances utterly helpless to prevent it.

Dick and Bob got around the main force of Tories and Indians, and soon were with their comrades, doing all they possibly could to keep the red and white demons from massacring the women and children.

The "Liberty Boys" did not stay together all the time, but divided up in parties of from ten to twenty, and went hither and thither, and harassed the Tories and Indians all they possibly could—they being able to do a good deal in this line, owing to the fact that they were on horseback, and could get around rapidly.

Slowly but surely the Tories and Indians worked their way down toward the lower end of the valley. The "Liberty Boys," of course, were forced down that way, also, but so far as that is concerned, they wanted to go that way, as that was where their services were needed by the patriot families.

Presently Dick and Bob, with half a dozen more of the "Liberty Boys," came to where a party of perhaps twenty Indians were attacking a cabin. As the red demons burst the front door down, the back door opened, and a woman and two children—one a boy of ten, the other a girl of about twelve—ran forth and darted toward the timber, which was a quarter of a mile away. A girl of perhaps seventeen or eighteen years followed them out of the house, but was headed off by the Indians, who had discovered what was taking place at the rear and rushed around there. The girl had a pistol in one hand and a tomahawk in the other, and Dick and Bob recognized her as being Laura Deane, the patriot girl who had led the "Liberty Boys" when they came to the youths' rescue when they were prisoners in the hands of the Tories under Ben Rock.

The brave young woman shot one Indian dead. The red demons rushed forward and would have tomahawked her but for Dick Slater, who leaped off his horse and knocked them right and left with the butt of his musket.

Bob and the other "Liberty Boys" followed Dick's example, and they succeeded in beating the Indians back. They fired a volley from the muskets as soon as the Indians fell back a few paces, and this completed the demoralization of this party of the red demons, and they fled in disorder.

Other parties were coming that way, however, and the youths knew it would not do to delay an instant; they must hasten if they were to succeed in saving the life of the brave girl.

"Leap into the saddle," said Dick, taking the girl's hand, and leading her to where his horse stood. "I will get up behind you, and then we will make our escape. We have done about all that we can do, I am sure."



"But my aunt and the children?" Laura cried.

"We will take them up on our horses, also."

"Oh, thank you—thank you!"

Dick assisted the girl into the saddle, and then leaped up behind. The other youths sprang into the saddles, and then the party rode after the woman and two children, and quickly overtook them. Lifting the three up on the backs of three of the horses, the youths again rode onward at a swift pace, leaving the Tories and Indians behind.

Dick made a signal with his handkerchief, and the other "Liberty Boys" saw it, and followed the little party.

There were no more houses in the valley that had not been reached by the Tories and Indians, so there was no need of staying longer. To do so would be to render themselves liable to being killed or captured.

It was a terrible scene they were leaving behind them—a scene of blood and massacre. And what was worst of all was that it was mainly the blood of innocent and helpless women and children.

Soon all the "Liberty Boys" were together, and it was seen that five were missing.

"Five of the boys are gone, Dick!" said Bob, in a sorrowful voice. "Five as brave boys as ever lived."

"You are right, Bob. Well, it can't be helped."

"No; but I'll make those scoundrels suffer for it if ever I get the chance! And if I don't get the chance I will make one."

The other youths all expressed great sorrow, for the five youths who were missing were well liked by all.

"How came you to be in the valley, Miss Laura?" asked Dick, after the matter of the missing "Liberty Boys" had been dismissed.

"I was visiting my aunt, father's sister, Mr. Slater," was the reply.

"Ah, I understand. Well, you selected a bad time for a visit, didn't you?"

"Yes; but I'm not sorry I was there. But for my presence there my aunt and the children might have lost their lives."

"True; you are a brave girl, Miss Laura. I saw you shoot one of the red demons dead."

"Yes, and I would do it again. I wish I could have killed a dozen with the one bullet!"

"And so do I. Ah, it is terrible to think of what has occurred in the valley, to-day! Scores of innocent and helpless women and children have been put to death."

"Yes, it has been a terrible, a horrible massacre, Mr. Slater."

"So it has, and I fear the end is not yet. I am afraid that prisoners have been taken, and that they will be tortured."

"Oh, that will be awful!"

"Yes, indeed; but there is no need of harrowing your feelings any further. Shall we go straight to your home, Miss Laura?"

"Yes; I think it will be safe. Don't you?"

"I do. I don't believe the Tories and Indians will come any farther in this direction."

"I hope not!"

An hour later they arrived at the home of the Deanes, and were given a warm greeting.

When Mrs. Deane was told of the terrible happenings in the valley she was horrified.

"Oh, that is terrible!—horrible!" she exclaimed. "But I am so glad you escaped!" this to her sister-in-law and the children, and to Laura as well.

"We would not have escaped had it not been for the brave work of the 'Liberty Boys,'" said Laura.

"Well, not one of the 'Liberty Boys' did anything braver than was done by you, Miss Laura," said Dick; and then he told the girl's mother how Laura had shot an Indian dead.

"She has the spirit of her father," said Mrs. Deane. "He is a wonderfully brave man, and has no fear of anything or anybody."

"Yes, and I will wager that her mother isn't a coward," said Bob, with a smile.

"You are right, Mr. Estabrook," said Laura, kissing her mother. "She is willing to give all the credit to father, but I am not; mother is as brave as any woman can be, I am certain."

"I knew it," said Bob.

## CHAPTER XII.

### FIGHTING THE TORIES AND INDIANS.

The "Liberty Boys" remained at the home of the Deanes only a few minutes; then Dick gave the order for the youths to mount once more.

"We will return to the valley, or to the edge of the valley at least," he said. "We may be able to do some good, and save a few lives."

A few minutes later the company was riding westward at a lively pace.

When they were within a quarter of a mile of the edge of the valley Dick called a halt.

"Dismount," he said.

The youths obeyed.

Then they tied their horses, after which Dick gave the order, and they stole forward through the timber.

They were soon at the margin of the timber, and could look out upon the valley.

Here and there were to be seen burning houses, and the Tories and Indians were moving about, in parties of from twenty to fifty, looking for plunder and for victims whom they might put to death.

Scattered about, within the view of the "Liberty Boys," were bodies of women and children who had been massacred, and it made the youths' blood run cold with horror, and then boil with anger.

"I'll tell you what we will do," said Dick.



"What?" was the eager query.

"We will go back, mount our horses, and come here and wait and watch; and when we see a party of the demons, red or white, come close enough so that we think we can do it with safety, we will dash out and surround them, and kill every one of them."

The plan met with the approval of all.

They were eager to put it into execution.

They hastened back to where they had left their horses, untied the animals, mounted, and rode back to the timber.

They took up their positions where they could watch the Tories and Indians, and yet not be seen by them.

They remained there, motionless and watchful, for perhaps half an hour, and no Tories or Indians came anywhere near them.

"Jove, this don't seem to be panning out very well," said Bob presently. "I don't think we are going to get a chance at any of the scoundrels."

"Wait, Bob; some of those parties will venture over in this direction after awhile, and then we will go for them, I tell you."

Pretty soon a band of Tories and Indians, to the number of about twenty, was seen coming across toward where the youths were concealed.

This party was evidently examining the bodies of the women and children, to see if all were dead.

"I think we shall be able to get that gang," said Dick. "Be ready for the signal, boys."

The youths nodded, and kept their eyes on the party of Tories and Indians.

Closer and closer it came.

When the Tories and Indians were within about two hundred yards of the edge of the timber they paused, and started; shortly afterward, in a direction which would take them farther away.

Dick realized this, and gave the signal.

Instantly the "Liberty Boys" urged their horses out from among the trees, and the entire party dashed straight toward the enemy.

The Tories and Indians did not see the youths till they were more than halfway to them, and then they gave utterance to startled yells, and started to run.

This was the worst thing they could have done.

Had they stood their ground, back to back, and fired with their muskets and pistols, they might have made a very good fight of it, but instead, they tried to escape by running. They saw they were greatly outnumbered, and this frightened them so that all they could think of was to get away.

This they were not to be permitted to do, however.

The "Liberty Boys" quickly surrounded them, and as they did so they fired a volley from their muskets and two or three pistol volleys, with the result that every one of the Tories and Indians went down, dead or wounded.

The youths had made a clean sweep of it.

Then they dashed back to the timber, and disappeared from sight.

The "Liberty Boys" were well pleased with the result of the affair.

"We settled those scoundrels, mighty quick," said Bob.

"So we did," agreed Dick.

"I wish another such gang would come this way."

"Possibly one will come; reload your weapons, so as to be ready if such proves to be the case."

The youths hastened to reload their muskets and pistols.

This did not take long, for they were experts at this sort of work.

They had just finished the work when one of the youths said:

"Look yonder, fellows; there comes another party."

All looked, and saw their comrade had spoken truly. Another party of Tories and redskins was coming, but it was a much larger party than the one they had just wiped out.

"There must be more than one hundred in that party," said Mark Morrison.

"Yes," said Dick. "There is nearer two hundred."

"Are we going to charge out and surround them, as we did the other gang, Dick?" asked Bob.

"No," was the reply. "There are too many of them, and it would prove too costly. We will remain here in the edge of the timber, protected by the trees, and then if they attempt to attack us we will have the advantage on our side."

"That's right."

"Yes."

"It would be dangerous to go out in the open against double our number."

"So it would."

"We could thrash them, even in the open," declared Bob.

"Yes, we might do so, Bob," said Dick; "but we would undoubtedly lose a number of our boys, and that is something I wish to guard against. We have lost a sufficient number for one day, already."

"Well, that's so, too."

The youths sat motionless in their saddles and watched the party approach.

As it drew nearer it was easy to see that it numbered twice as many as there were in the "Liberty Boys" company.

They were not alarmed, however; they felt that so long as they had the shelter of the trees, they had the advantage.

The party of Tories and Indians paused when it came to where their comrades lay dead and dying, and then they suddenly rushed toward the timber, yelling and whooping, and brandishing their weapons.

Doubtless they thought they would intimidate the enemy by making a lot of noise, but they did not know the "Liberty Boys." Noise had no effect on them.

"Steady, boys," called out Dick. "Wait till they are



well within range, and then when I give the word, let them have it."

The youths nodded, and leveling their muskets, took careful aim, and waited for the word.

Closer and closer came the Tories and Indians.

They were brandishing their weapons and yelling like mad.

They certainly looked fierce enough; they looked more like fiends from the lower regions than human beings.

But this did not matter to the "Liberty Boys."

Looks had no influence over them.

They knew that the scoundrels would succumb to bullets if the leaden pellets were properly placed, and they were the youths to place them properly.

Suddenly Dick cried out, in a sharp, clear voice:

"Fire, 'Liberty Boys'!"

The youths obeyed instantly.

Crash—roar!

Upon the air rose the sound of the volley, and at least seventy-five of the Tories and Indians went down, dead and dying.

It was a terrible, a wonderfully destructive volley.

It brought the enemy to a sudden stop.

They had not been expecting any such reception as this.

Doubtless they had expected to be fired upon, but they had not been prepared to see nearly half their number go down, as had been the case.

They paused and stared fearfully in the direction of the timber.

Then their leader recovered his nerve, and called out: "Charge! Charge them while their weapons are empty!"

The Tories and Indians again leaped forward, and they fired a volley as they came.

The bullets rattled against the trees and bushes, and one or two of the "Liberty Boys" were wounded, but not seriously. They were so well protected by the trees that the bullets could not do much damage.

But there was another surprise in store for the Tories and Indians. They had not advanced more than a few yards when they were treated to another volley from the timber—this one being from the "Liberty Boys" pistols.

The youths were good shots with the pistol, and at least forty of the enemy went down.

"Now another volley!" cried Dick.

The youths had drawn two pistols, and now they fired a second pistol-volley.

At least twenty of the redskins and Tories went down this time, and this completed their demoralization. They had already come to a stop, when the second volley was fired by the "Liberty Boys," and now the third one sent them skurrying away like frightened rabbits.

There were not more than sixty or seventy left, and they ran for their lives.

"Charge them, 'Liberty Boys'!" cried Dick. "Let's make a clean sweep of it!"

This met with the wishes of the "Liberty Boys."

They urged their horses out into the open, and dashed after the enemy.

They gave utterance to their thrilling battle-cry of "Down with the king! Long live liberty!" and it struck terror to the hearts of the fugitives.

They ran at the top of their speed, but it was no use; they could not get away from the youths on horseback, and the result was that they were, one after another, shot or cut down. Not one escaped.

The "Liberty Boys" had made a clean sweep of it, sure enough.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FIGHTING AGAINST ODDS.

The "Liberty Boys" were busy all the rest of the day.

They skirted the valley, keeping just within the edge of the timber, and whenever they saw an opportunity to make a sudden dash and strike the Tories and Indians a blow, they did it.

The enemy became too watchful after awhile, however, and the youths could not get any more chances.

The Tories and Indians drew away from the edge of the valley, and assembled in force near Forty Fort, which they completely surrounded.

The "Liberty Boys" watched the scene from the timber at the edge of the valley, at a point opposite the fort.

"They are not going to give the soldiers and women and children a chance to escape, Dick," said Bob.

"It looks that way, Bob."

"See, they have the fort completely surrounded."

"Yes."

"Do you suppose they will set fire to it?"

"I don't know; I hardly think that Colonel Butler will hold out that long."

"You think he won't?"

"That is what I think; and perhaps it will be better for him to surrender, for if the Tories and Indians are forced to burn the fort to get at the inmates they will be so inflamed with anger and excitement that they will murder the majority, I am sure."

"Perhaps so; but they might not."

"I wouldn't trust them."

"You would hold the fort, then, and fight it out to the bitter end, Bob?"

"That's what I would do."

"Well, it could only result in the certain death of all who are within its wall by surrendering; some may escape with their lives."

"It will be very few, I'm thinking; those bloodthirsty redskins won't let one of the whites live if they can help it."

"I fear you are not far from right in your estimate of the situation."



"I am sure of that."

There was some desultory firing back and forth, between the Tories and the soldiers in the fort, but not much damage was done, as the Tories and Indians were too far away from the fort.

The "Liberty Boys" watched, waited, and discussed the situation.

They hardly knew what to do.

They wished to aid the people in the fort, but did not know how they were to do it.

At last evening came, and the youths, who had tied their horses back in the timber a ways, and were seated near the edge of the valley, decided that they would eat their supper.

They had some dry meat and bread, and this they ate, finishing by drinking from a spring which bubbled out from underneath a rock near at hand.

By the time they had finished it was growing dark.

Over toward the fort campfires were blazing. They had been built by the Tories and Indians, and there was a complete circle of them, surrounding the fort.

The campfires were made of driftwood which had floated down the Susquehanna during times of high water.

The youths now held a council, to try to decide on their course of action.

They talked there for an hour, but were no nearer a solution of the matter at the finish than when they began.

At last Dick said:

"I think I will go over and see what the Tories and Indians are doing. That may give me an idea. You boys stay here till I come back."

"I'm going with you," said Bob.

"All right; come along."

"Say, you two fellows want to look out," said Mark Morrison, a sober look on his face. "You must remember that about half that gang out there are Indians, and if you make any noise at all, anywhere in their vicinity, they will hear it, and the first thing you know you will have a dozen of them on top of you."

"Oh, we know all about Indians, Mark," said Dick.

"Yes," said Bob. "We are not going to let them capture us."

"Well, you have already been captured a couple of times, and what has happened in the past may happen again."

"We'll keep our eyes open."

Then the two stole away in the direction of the fort.

It was now quite dark, and they had no fear that they would be seen; on the other hand, they would be able to see the Tories and Indians, who would be in the light thrown out by the campfires.

At last the two were within a quarter of a mile of the nearest campfire, and they paused and stood stock still and listened for several minutes.

They could hear the faint murmur of the voices of the Tories and Indians.

They could see them stirring about, also.

"Say, Dick," whispered Bob, "look up yonder, where

that big fire is. Isn't that a stake they are driving into the ground?"

"I believe it is, Bob."

"Yes; that's just what they are doing."

"Come; let's move up that way."

The two moved away, at right angles from the course they had come, and were soon about the distance away from the big fire that they had been from the other.

Here they paused and surveyed the scene with interest.

The Tories were not assisting in the work of driving the stake in the ground, but were standing around, watching. The Indians were hard at work, however, and it was only too evident what the scene meant. Some of the prisoners that had been captured that day were to be burned at the stake!

"Say, I don't like the looks of that, Dick!" whispered Bob.

"Neither do I, Bob."

"It means that somebody is to be tortured by the red fiends."

"Yes, that is what it means. Only, I am afraid it will be several bodies, instead of somebody."

"I am afraid you are right about that."

"Where are the prisoners, Bob? Do you see them?"

"Yes; yonder are some."

"Oh, yes. Where that clump of Indians are standing."

"Yes; they have the prisoners surrounded."

"What shall we do?"

"I give it up, Dick?"

"I'll tell you what we'll do. We will have the 'Liberty Boys' come over here, and when the Indians go to tie the victim to the stake we will open fire on them, and cause them to stop operations."

"I'm in for doing that; but I fear it will have only a temporarily restraining effect."

"Possibly you are right; but we will have the satisfaction of killing some of them, anyhow."

"True. Well, if we are going to do that we had better hurry back to where the boys are."

"Yes; come along."

They moved away as swiftly as possible, and at the same time did not make any noise that might attract the attention of the Indians.

They ran part of the way back to the edge of the valley, and were panting when they reached the spot where the "Liberty Boys" were in waiting.

"Hello! what's the matter?" exclaimed Mark Morrison, who noticed that the youths were panting. "Were you chased?"

"No, Mark," replied Dick; "but we have come back for you boys. The Indians are getting ready to burn some of their prisoners at the stake, and I have made up my mind that we 'Liberty Boys' will ride out there, getting as close to them as possible, and when they go to tie a prisoner to the stake we will make a sudden dash forward, fire a



couple of volleys, and then get away before they can do us any damage."

"That will be just the thing!"

All the youths said the same.

They were eager for a chance to strike the enemy a sudden, hard blow.

They lost no time in rushing to where the horses were tied, and untying them and mounting.

This done, the entire company of "Liberty Boys" rode slowly out from among the trees.

As soon as they were in the valley, where there was nothing to make their progress hard, they urged their horses to a swifter pace.

When they were about a quarter of a mile away from the camp-fires they brought their horses to a stop. It was very dark, but to advance closer would be dangerous, as the Indians would undoubtedly hear the hoofbeats.

This was close enough, however, for when the time came they would be able to make a sudden dash forward and be upon the enemy before it knew danger threatened.

The youths realized that they had got there none too soon.

There was considerable excitement at the big campfire, where the stake had been driven in the ground, and the youths saw the Indians were bringing a prisoner to the stake.

"Get ready, boys," whispered Dick to the nearest one, who sent the word around. Soon all were waiting, on the alert, ready to urge their horses forward at a gallop the instant the signal was heard.

They cocked their muskets, and held them ready for instant use.

Dick waited till the Indians had dragged the prisoner to the stake, but before they could tie the poor fellow up the youth gave the signal for the charge.

The signal was a low, tremulous whistle, and the instant the youths heard it they dashed forward at the full speed of their horses.

The thud, thud, of the horses' hoofs sounded like muffled thunder.

It came to the hearing of the Indians as a great surprise.

It frightened them, also, for they leaped up and seized their weapons, while they glared into the darkness.

The "Liberty Boys" were almost upon the Indians now, however, and again a whistle sounded.

This was the signal to fire, and the "Liberty Boys" obeyed instantly.

Crash—roar!

The sound of the volley rang out loudly, and at least fifty of the Indians fell to the ground, dead and dying.

Then on the air rose wild shrieks, yells, and screams, mingled with which were groans of the wounded and dying.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### COLONEL BUTLER SURRENDERS.

The "Liberty Boys" muskets were fastened to their bodies by straps, so that the instant they had fired the weapons they let them drop at their sides and drew pistols.

Then, as they dashed right into the midst of the Indians, at the top of the speed of their horses, they fired a pistol volley at the red fiends at close range.

So utterly demoralized were the Indians at this sudden and unexpected attack that they were unable to do anything, and the "Liberty Boys" had dashed through their ranks and were away again before any damage could be inflicted upon them.

This affair caused great excitement in the encampment of the Tories and Indians.

The daring of the "Liberty Boys" appalled the red and white scoundrels.

They would not have believed that a small force, consisting of fewer than one hundred, would dare dash into the midst of hundreds of their enemies, but the "Liberty Boys" had done so, and what was more, they had succeeded in doing a lot of damage, and in escaping without any of their number being killed or wounded.

The youths rode away a distance of half a mile, and came to a stop.

They proceeded to reload their muskets and pistols, and while doing so discussed the exciting scene through which they had just passed.

"Well, we gave the scoundrels a surprise, I think," said Bob Estabrook.

"Yes," agreed Dick. "We put a stop to the work of the Indians and delayed the torture of the prisoner who was about to be tied to the stake."

"Yes; and that is the trouble, Dick—we have only delayed it," said Mark Morrison.

"True; but perhaps we can make another dash, and do the same thing over again."

"I don't know about that; the Indians and Tories will be on their guard, don't you think?"

"I suppose you are right; yes, I fear that it will be impossible for us to repeat our feat of dashing upon the enemy and firing at them at close range and making our escape uninjured."

After some further conversation the "Liberty Boys" turned and rode back toward the fort.

They headed toward the big campfire where the stake had been erected.

When they were yet a quarter of a mile away they saw that it would be dangerous to make a dash as they had done before, for a great force was now gathered there; there were at least five hundred Tories and Indians, and they were surrounding the stake, to which, as the youths could see, a prisoner was at that very moment being tied.



The cries of the doomed man came plainly to the hearing of the "Liberty Boys."

The sound caused the blood to boil within their veins. They were wild to go to the aid of the poor fellow, but realized that to do so would be like butting their heads against a stone wall.

What should they do?

Dick asked the other this question, and Bob said:

"Let's advance to within musket-shot distance and give the scoundrels a volley, anyway, Dick."

"All right; we will do it. But, remember, we will have to whirl our horses and get away very quickly if we wish to save our skins."

"Yes, so we will," agreed Bob.

The youths said they would remember, and then they advanced, slowly and cautiously.

Presently they were as close as they dared go. To advance any further would be to be seen by the sharp eyes of the Indians, some of whom seemed to almost possess the catlike faculty of seeing in the dark.

There was a brief period of silence, and then a low, quavering whistle was heard.

It was the signal to fire.

Crash—roar!

Loudly the volley rang out, and upon the air rose the wild yells of the Tories and the screeches of the Indians.

The "Liberty Boys" knew they had not time to spare. They did not wait to see how much damage they had done, but whirled their horses around and dashed away at the best speed of the animals.

They were followed by a storm of bullets from the muskets of the Tories; but thanks to the promptness of their action, the bullets fell short, and did no damage.

The Indians followed the youths, however, running as fast as they could, but of course they could not overtake the horses.

It made it necessary for the "Liberty Boys" to leave the valley, however. They knew the Tories and Indians would scout around in every direction, in search of them.

So they withdrew into the timber, part way up a steep hill—almost a mountain, and here they went into camp.

Here they remained till morning, and then they made their way to the home of the Deanes.

They were given a warm welcome, and the women and girls went to work and cooked breakfast for the "Liberty Boys."

It took quite a while, as it is no light task to cook sufficient food for nearly one hundred healthy, hearty young men; but it was ready at last, and the youths ate heartily.

The women and girls talked with the "Liberty Boys," and asked questions about the situation in the valley, and the youths told them all they knew about it.

"And do you suppose the Tories and Indians will burn the fort down?" asked Laura Deane.

"Yes, unless Colonel Butler surrenders," said Dick.

"Do you think he will do that?"

"I don't know; he may do so."

"If he thinks he can save lives by doing so he will surrender," said Mark Morrison.

"But don't you think that if he surrenders he and all the inmates of the fort will be killed, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I don't know, Bob; possibly it won't be so bad as that."

Bob shook his head. It was evident that he did not have much hope that the Tories and Indians would be merciful.

"The Indians are demons," he said, "and the Tories are worse. God pity all who are already prisoners in their hands, and all who may become prisoners, is what I say!"

"I am afraid that there will be bad doings in the valley to-day," said Dick, soberly.

"Yes, and you may be sure there were bad doings there last night, after we were forced to get out."

After they had eaten breakfast the "Liberty Boys" mounted their horses, which had been given feed while their owners were eating, and rode away.

They were riding along, and had almost arrived at the edge of the valley, when there came the sharp report of a rifle, and a bullet knocked Dick's hat off, and just missed Bob, who was on the farther side from the one on which the shot was fired from.

At a single bound Dick was off his horse and ten feet away, and he darted in among the trees. Someone had tried to kill him, and he wanted to see who it was.

He saw the figure of a man running through the timber, and called out:

"Stop! Stop, or I'll fire!"

But the fugitive did not stop, and drawing his pistol, Dick paused, and, taking quick aim, fired.

A wild yell of pain went up from the fugitive, and he fell headlong to the ground.

"You downed him, Dick!" cried Bob, who had leaped off his horse and followed his friend.

"Yes, I thought I could stop him."

They were soon at the spot where the man lay, and it was evident that he was not long for this world. He had been hit in a vital point—the lungs—and was fast going.

As Dick caught sight of the wounded man's face he exclaimed:

"It's Ben Rock!"

"So it is," agreed Bob.

It was indeed Ben Rock, the leader of the band of Tories that had made prisoners of Dick and Bob.

He turned a look of hatred on Dick and Bob.

"Ye've killed—me—blast—ye!" he said, gaspingly.

"Well, that's what you tried to do to me," said Dick.

"Yas, an' I wush't I hed done et!"

"No doubt regarding that. But why did you try to shoot me down?"

"Ye—killed—my—brother."

"We did? When?"

"Las'—night."

"Is that so? We did not know it."



"He—wuz—ermong—ther ones—ye—killed, over by—ther—fort."

"Well, it served him right, too," said Bob, and even as he spoke there was a gurgling sound, and Ben Rock was dead.

"He's a goner, Bob."

"Yes. Well, it is a good thing for the people of this part of the country."

"I guess you are right. But come; let's be going."

"And leave him lying there?"

"Yes; we have no time to waste, burying him, now. Later we may do so."

The two returned to where their comrades were awaiting them, and explained matters.

Then they mounted their horses, and the company rode onward once more."

When they came to the edge of the valley they came to a stop and dismounted. Tying their horses, they made their way to where they could get a view of the fort.

They saw that the Tories and Indians were still there, and that the fort was surrounded.

They talked of various plans for aiding the inmates of the fort, but none were considered to be practicable, and were given up as fast as talked of.

About noon a white flag went up over the fort. Colonel Butler had surrendered.

The inmates of the fort marched out and were made prisoners by the Tories and Indians.

The "Liberty Boys," from a distance, saw this, and they were fearful that it portended a terrible tragedy, for they believed the prisoners would be put to death.

In this they were happily disappointed, for the Tories and Indians did not put the prisoners to death; and about the middle of the afternoon they marched away, up the valley, with their prisoners.

The "Liberty Boys" mounted their horses and rode to the fort, and took a look at the scene.

At the point where the stake stood, they found charred bones, thus proving that some of the prisoners had been burned at the stake. Just how many were thus treated no one knows. Historians have had to guess at the number. History states, further, however, that in addition to those who were burned at the stake, others were placed on fires and held down with pitchforks, until burned to death, while others still were hacked to death with knives.

Certainly there were some terrible atrocities committed in the Wyoming Valley on the night of the massacre.

The "Liberty Boys" knew they could not rescue the prisoners, so did not try; but, sick at heart, on account of what they had seen, they rode back to the home of the Deanes.

They stayed overnight, and Dick was greatly pleased to see that Henry Holt, a bright, handsome "Liberty Boy," had taken a liking to Laura Deane, and he was sure that the girl was equally well pleased with Henry.

"I believe it will result in an engagement between them,"

Bob," he told his friend that night, and it turned out that he was right. Henry and Laura plighted their troth before the "Liberty Boys" took their leave next morning.

After breakfast the youths bade good-by to their friends, and mounting their horses, rode away toward the south-east.

It was a good while before the Wyoming Valley was occupied by settlers again, as the patriot families were afraid they might have a second visit from the Tories and Indians.

Of the prisoners taken away from the Wyoming Valley, some died, some were killed, some escaped, and others were later permitted to return to their homes. But the terrible massacre at Wyoming will always be remembered with horror by the people of the civilized world.

THE END.

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